

# Desolate Era

## (莽荒纪)

### Book 13

#### Tristar Crescent Abode

#### I Eat Tomatoes

#### (我吃西红柿)

##### Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

# Chapter 1: The Senior Apprentice of the Daofather

Whooooosh.

Distorted rainbow light could be seen coming from within the torn-open void corridor. The white-robed Lord Jiang led Ji Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing in moving through this void corridor.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly revealed a look of surprise, and the nearby Whitewater Hound and Little Qing stared in shock as well. This was because this void corridor’s colors were fluctuating from fiery red that made it look like a tunnel of fire to a watery blue that made it seem as though they were moving through a tunnel of water...and despite flying through this corridor for enough time to boil a kettle of tea, they were still flying.

“Brother Jiang,” Ning immediately asked, “Why have we been flying through this void corridor for so long? Can it be that it normally takes this long to fly through a torn open void tunnel?”

“No.” The white-robed Lord Jiang shook his head. “Normally, to leave a major world, after you rip open the fabric of space you can easily leave the world and enter the infinite void, then use a Greater Teleport and easily arrive at your destination. But the place we are headed to is Master’s Tristar Crescent Abode, the most mysterious place in the entire Three Realms. Ordinary techniques are completely useless in going to Master’s place.”

“Oh.” Ning nodded slightly.

“I’m not the person controlling this void tunnel right now; it is Master who is guiding us in,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said. “Through this void tunnel, we can directly access the Tristar Crescent Abode.”

“How much longer?” Ning look at the void tunnel surrounding him; it had just turned into a completely pitch-black color. The pitch-black tunnel was twisted and distorted as it spiraled forward, causing Ning to

feel a vague sense of fear.

He felt as though if he were to be wrapped up into the distorted space, he would be ground to death.

“Soon, soon,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh. Just as his words came out...

Whoosh! A misty world suddenly appeared in front of the void tunnel. The white-robed Lord Jiang, Ji Ning, and the others flew out into the world.

“Here we are!” Lord Jiang stood there in midair, a look of delight on his face. He smiled as he swept the misty world with his gaze.

“This...this is the Tristar Crescent Abode?” Ji Ning stared downwards. What he saw was an infinitely vast world with many cities. He could tell just by looking downwards how vast this world was.

Lord Jiang said, “This is the world which Master established. In terms of size, it’s comparable to the world of the Grand Xia.”

“Comparable to the Grand Xia?” Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all nodded to themselves.

Ning asked, “So the Patriarch personally established this world? According to the legends, formidable figures of the Three Realms are able to establish some smaller worlds of a few tens of thousands of kilometers...but it’s actually possible to establish a world comparable to the world of the Grand Xia in size as well?”

“Haha...the world of the Primordial Era was established by Pangu. Compared to the various ‘major worlds’, it was unfathomably larger,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said, shaking his head and laughing. “Although Master cannot do as Pangu did, he’s still able to establish an estate-world that is comparable to the Grand Xia in size.”

“This estate-world is completely separate from the outside world. It has its own cycle of reincarnation, and a miniature Netherworld Kingdom. After dying, the souls of the world will be reborn into this world anew,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh. “This estate world is actually a miniature version of the Primordial World of Pangu; it is completely outside the

structure of the Three Realms. Thus, not even other major powers can enter it.”

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing were all secretly stunned. Completely outside the structure of the Three Realms...a completely stand-alone cycle of reincarnation...

Major powers truly were incredible!

“Mount Innerheart is at the very center of this estate-world.” Lord Jiang pointed towards the distance. “Right over there.”

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all raised their heads to look. Indeed, they could vaguely make out the outlines of a mountain that was hovering in the skies.

“Let’s go.” The white-robed Lord Jiang led Ning and the others to fly out. The hovering mountains grew closer and closer, and one could even make out the fairy cranes and running beasts around it.

Whoosh. Lord Jiang, Ji Ning, and the others flew to the very top of the mountain, landing atop a mountain path. “If we follow this path to the very top, we shall reach the place where Master trains in the Dao and teaches his disciples,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said. Ning and the others followed him upwards.

The mountain path winded up the mountain, but fortunately there were stone steps to walk on.

After walking a short while, the white-robed Lord Jiang turned and moved onto a well-trodden pathway that led into a mountain forest. “Ji Ning, come with me to meet our eldest apprentice-brother.”

“Eldest apprentice-brother?” Ning felt slightly puzzled, but he followed the white-robed Lord Jiang deep into the forest.

“He was the very first to follow Master. You absolutely must not be disrespectful to him,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

“Right.” Ning nodded. As he walked forward, he could just barely make out a voice speaking out.

“A one, a two, a three and a four. A five and a six, a seven and an eight, a nine and a ten...now fall down!” As the bright voice rang out, a ‘crunch’ sound could be heard, followed by a rumble...

The white-robed Lord Jiang and Ning moved quite quickly. As they moved closer to the sound of the voice, they saw an enormous tree fall down. Through the other trees, Ning could just barely make out the figure of a woodcutter dressed in grass shoes and a grass hat. The woodcutter’s skin was swarthy and dark, but he was dressed quite simply.

The white-robed Lord Jiang walked over. “Eldest-apprentice brother.”

“Eldest apprentice-brother?” Ning was flabbergasted. This woodcutter? He was their eldest apprentice-brother?

The woodcutter in front of him appeared very ordinary and was dressed in a very ordinary manner as well. Ning’s judgment was quite astute by now, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t see anything special about the tattered grass shoes or raggedy clothes; they seemed to be ordinary clothes, not magic treasures.

And...no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t sense any presence or aura stemming from this woodcutter at all. In fact, Ning didn’t even feel the slightest hint of danger emanating from him. No matter from what angle Ning inspected him, this woodcutter seemed like an ordinary mortal!

“Whew.” The woodcutter rested his hatchet over his shoulder, straightened his waist, then turned and said with a laugh, “Haha, so it’s Lord Jiang. Why have you come to my place?”

“Per Master’s orders, I went to the world of the Grand Xia to bring our junior apprentice-brother. I’m back now, and I thought I’d bring him over to see you, senior apprentice-brother,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said.

“Junior apprentice-brother?” The woodcutter looked at Ning, looked at him quite carefully. His gaze, however, seemed quite ordinary. It didn’t seem to be the slightest bit penetrating.

“He’s our junior apprentice-brother. His name is Ji Ning, and he is

currently just a Wanxiang Adept,” the white-robed Lord Jiang said. “Ji Ning, hurry up and pay your respects to our eldest apprentice-brother.”

“Greetings, eldest apprentice-brother,” Ning said while bowing.

The woodcutter laughed. “I’m just a chopper of firewood. Still, for you to be accepted by Master at such a young age means that Master must value you highly. Master is very good-natured, but you still need to work hard and not disappoint him.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

“Alright, you can go now, Lord Jiang. Take this Ji Ning to meet Master,” the woodcutter said.

“Alright.” The white-robed Lord Jiang immediately led Ning away.

Back on the main mountain road.

Ning said, puzzled, “Eldest apprentice-brother...he isn’t a mortal, is he?”

When he saw the likes of Lu Dongbin and the Xia Emperor, he could clearly tell how incredible they were. But of course, it was also possible that this was because Lu Dongbin and the others hadn’t retracted their auras! But this woodcutter...no matter how hard Ning tried, he couldn’t sense even the slightest hint of cultivation about him. In fact, the woodcutter even had calluses on his hands, and there was some white hair on his head.

“Of course not,” Lord Jiang said. “From the Primordial Era to the present day, Master has taken in many disciples, and there are even quite a few True Immortals and Empyrean Gods. But in terms of power, eldest apprentice-brother is the undisputed number one! He’s far more powerful than the rest of us.”

“The undisputed number one?” Ning was stunned.

“Right. Only, ever since the destruction of the Primordial World, eldest apprentice-brother has never left this world of the Tristar Crescent Abode,” Lord Jiang said. “This is why there are very, very few people in the Three Realms who know of him.”

Ning couldn't help but feel stunned. It was only after the destruction of the Primordial World that the three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds were born. An unfathomably long period of time had passed since the creation of the three thousand major worlds, but this eldest apprentice-brother actually had the patience and temperament to never roam the Three Realms? Generally speaking, powerful experts would like to stroll about many of the places of the Three Realms. After all, each of the trillion minor worlds had their own unique aspects, and were quite exciting.

Lu Dongbin, for example, liked to play around in the mortal world. He had left behind his legacy in countless worlds.

The names of many formidable figures had been spread throughout the Three Realms. But eldest apprentice-brother had never left after the destruction of the Primordial World?

"What is his name?" Ning asked.

"Woodcutter," Lord Jiang said.

"I meant his real name. Or his Daoist title," Ning said.

"Real name, Daoist title...all I know is that eldest apprentice-brother is referred to as the woodcutter." Lord Jiang shook his head. "I don't know anything else. When you are training in the Dao on the mountain, you can come to this mountain forest to train. Perhaps he will see you and be willing to guide you."

Ning nodded. So the senior disciple under Patriarch Subhuti's tutelage was actually such a mysterious figure. Ning was quite curious as well.

Soon, Lord Jiang brought Ning to the entrance to the cavern. The entrance had a large stone in front of it, which had three words on it: Tristar Crescent Abode!

By each side of the entrance, there were two azure-robed Dao novitiates. For these two to be assigned to Mount Innerheart meant that they were monstrously talented figures themselves. However, here at Mount Innerheart, they were only viewed as ordinary figures. They were already

quite delighted to be chosen as entrance guards.

“Patriarch.”

“Patriarch.”

The two novices respectfully bowed towards Lord Jiang. Lord Jiang was a Pure Yang True Immortal. His rank was extremely high!

“Mm.” Lord Jiang nodded, then brought Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing through the entrance. The two novices naturally did not bar his way.

.....

They continued to walk forward into the cavern.

The insides of this Tristar Crescent Abode was quite beautiful and graceful. It had all sorts of fairy cranes and animals. Their auras were all retracted and hidden, but despite that Ning could still sense a tremendous degree of threat and power emanating from them.

The aura of the Tristar Crescent Abode itself was quite calm and peaceful. The various beasts and Diremonsters didn't have even a hint of a baleful, savage aura at all. They seemed extraordinary docile.

“When the Patriarch takes on disciples, he doesn't care about their birth or lineage. Thus, aside from humans, even many monsters and Fiendgods have come to learn the Dao from him,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh. “The Patriarch has a particular rule; anyone who comes to Mount Innerheart is forbidden from fighting with the other disciples. If any disciple dares to assault another, the Patriarch will immediately intervene to suppress the fight and shatter his soul!”

“No matter who! Even I am not permitted to act against those various younger generation disciples. If I do, then Master will kill me as well,” Lord Jiang said. “This is an iron rule that no one can violate.”

Ning nodded. No wonder the aura here was so peaceful. So all types of battle were completely forbidden. The Patriarch himself was at the top of the mountain. Who would dare act wildly?

They continued to walk forward. On the path upwards, they heard various greetings, such as ‘Patriarch’, ‘uncle-master’, ‘uncle-master’, ‘Patriarch’, and more. Clearly, Lord Jiang’s status was very high.

“Master is inside.” Lord Jiang pointed to an ordinary-looking Daoist monastery up ahead. There were two more Dao novitiates standing in front of the monastery.

“Uncle-master, the Patriarch instructed us long ago that Ji Ning can be brought straight to him. There’s no need for any report to be made,” one of the novitiates said with a smile.

# Chapter 2: The Status of Daoist Threelives

"The two spirit-beasts should wait here for now," the Dao novitiate instructed.

Ning nodded. Little Qing and Uncle White both obediently stood to one side, waiting silently. Both of them knew quite well that the person within this Daoist monastery was an awe-inspiringly famous supreme power of the Three Realms, Patriarch Subhuti.

"Let's go." The white-robed Lord Jiang led Ning directly into the monastery.

"Uncle White, Master is going to go meet a Daofather. I feel like I'm dreaming." Little Qing's eyes were filled with excitement.

The Whitewater Hound nodded gently as well. He, too, was still in a state of shock. That little child who had trained in the sword and in archery by his side...he was actually about to become an apprentice to a major power, Patriarch Subhuti. "A person's fate truly is unfathomable."

Within the monastery.

There was an empty region filled with many prayer mats. In front of this empty region, there was an elevated platform, atop which there was another prayer mat. On this elevated prayer mat, there was a skinny, white-bearded elder. This skinny elder was dressed in loose robes. He was seated in the lotus position, and he emanated an aura that caused others to feel at peace in their heart.

"He is Patriarch Subhuti?" Upon seeing this white-bearded elder, Ning couldn't help but secretly feel nervous. This was a truly major power, a power that had even killed other Fiendgod Daofathers, a power that was acclaimed as the most mysterious Daofather of the Three Realms!

How could Ning not feel nervous in front of such a person?

"Master, I've brought Ji Ning over," Lord Jiang said with great respect.

"I bow in respect to you, Daofather," Ning said with great respect as well.

Patriarch Subhuti opened his eyes, looking at Ning. A hint of a smile appeared on his face as he nodded gently. He then instructed Lord Jiang, “You can leave for now. Ji Ning can stay by himself.”

“Yes.” The white-robed Lord Jiang respectfully departed, leaving behind only Ning and Patriarch Subhuti.

Patriarch Subhuti said with a calm smile, “No need to be nervous. Pick any prayer mat and sit down first.”

“Yes.” Ning chose a prayer mat, then sat down in the lotus position.

“I watched the Conclave of Immortal Destiny of the world of the Grand Xia. Of the participants, you, Woodpass, and the Sloppy Daoist were the most outstanding,” Patriarch Subhuti evaluated. “Crimsonbright ended up choosing Woodpass...and this was as I expected. In choosing disciples, Crimsonbright cares about mindset and temperament the most. The temperament of that Woodpass truly is most suited to him.”

Ning couldn’t help but sigh in secret. The spirit of the underwater estate had said that Patriarch Subhuti was very good at teaching students. Comparatively speaking, Daofather Crimsonbright and Grand Emperor Xuanwu’s teaching abilities were significantly lower. For even Patriarch Subhuti to praise both Woodpass and Sloppy as excellent meant that they truly did have potential.

“But in my eyes, you have even more potential than the other two,” Patriarch Subhuti said.

Ning felt a surge of joy in his heart. This was the very first time someone had said that he had more potential than Sloppy and Woodpass...and the speaker was Patriarch Subhuti!

“The path of Immortal cultivation is filled with many dangers and obstacles. Thus, with each step, you need to leave a firm footprint as you walk forward in a stable manner. Your heart must be stable as well. This is indeed true,” Patriarch Subhuti said. “From this perspective, Woodpass and Sloppy are both excellent disciples. Their foundations were the most stable amongst the contestants in the Conclave, and their hearts were also the most stable and calm as well.”

"However...everything in this world is divided into yin and yang," Patriarch Subhuti said. "Although it is important to be stable and solid, it is also important to be sharp."

"You need to be stable, but you also need sharpness."

"Stability is yin, while sharpness is yang! When yin and yang support each other, one can walk farther on one's path." Patriarch Subhuti laughed. "Ji Ning, you are far 'sharper' than the other two, and your foundation is quite solid as well. Only...a disciple like you is harder to guide and teach. It is very easy to teach disciples like Sloppy and Woodpass. So long as you let them slowly train and slowly adventure, they will slowly rise in power."

"As for you...your rate of improvement will be faster, but things will also be more risky. Your future potential might be higher than theirs, but you might also perish midway." Patriarch Subhuti looked at Ning. "Today, I shall impart a few words to you. You need to memorize them."

"The path of Immortal cultivation... your goals should be distant and grand, with Pangu and Nuwa as your models."

"The path of Immortal cultivation...it requires you to lower your head and watch the road, for you to remember to maintain a solid foundation. Do not merely think about soaring into the skies; when a bird soars too far, its eggs might be stolen and destroyed. It will perish, its Dao gone."

"The path of Immortal cultivation...it requires caution. It is a boat that will sail for ten thousand years that you must control with care."

"The path of Immortal cultivation...it requires sharpness. Only with a heart that is filled with a desire to charge into the heavens can you walk even farther on this path."

Patriarch Subhuti's words were simple, but they struck at the very foundation of an Immortal cultivator's heart and mind.

Everyone summoned before Patriarch Subhuti as a student had superb talent and comprehensive abilities. What determined one's accomplishments after that...was the heart!

"Ji Ning shall firmly memorize these words," Ning said seriously.

"How to make your goals grand but not too high...how to be cautious and yet have the desire to charge into the heavens...you will need to handle this yourself. The world is divided into yin and yang, and between yin and yang lies the heart," Patriarch Subhuti said.

Ning nodded.

As soon as the Patriarch had met him, he had imparted these words. Ning understood how important these words were, and also the principles which the Patriarch spoke of. However...some things were easy to 'understand' but hard to 'carry out'. On the path of Immortal cultivation, one would need to constantly remind one's self, so as to prevent one's self from embarking on a wrong path. These four things the Patriarch had advised him regarding was like four signposts on the Immortal path that would constantly remind him.

.....

Patriarch Subhuti continued to speak. "I watched the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. You should have learned the divine ability, [Starseizing Hand]."

"Yes." Ning admitted it. Since the Patriarch himself had said the words [Starseizing Hand], how could he even think about hiding it?

"My fellow Daoist Threelives...he finally has a true successor. His divine ability has once more reappeared in the Three Realms!" Patriarch Subhuti let out an emotional sigh. "Little bear, why haven't you come out yet?"

Whoosh. A figure suddenly appeared out of nowhere next to Ning. It was the giant yellow bear.

"Eh?!" Ning realized to his astonishment that the giant yellow bear next to him was quite solid and seemingly real, as though he were a living creature. He didn't seem as illusory and dreamlike as he did when he was the spirit within the underwater estate.

"This little bear pays his respects to the Daofather." The giant yellow bear fell to his knees, pressing his forehead against the ground.

"So indeed, Ji Ning, you managed to enter the Starseizing Manor and learned the divine ability within it." Patriarch Subhuti nodded.

Ning revealed a surprised look. "Patriarch, the Starseizing Manor...?"

The nearby giant yellow bear explained, "The 'Starseizing Manor' is the true, original name of this underwater estate. Although the estate was left behind by Master for his successors, it was also the estate which Master lived in. In the past, Master would often receive his guests within the Starseizing Manor, and even invite some Fiendgods to listen to him expound upon the Dao."

Ning instantly thought back to the many giant prayer mats in the middle of the underwater estate. Indeed, many people must have come to listen to lectures on the Dao.

Patriarch Subhuti said, "The relationship between Threelives and the Starseizing Manor was similar to the relationship between myself and the Tristar Crescent Abode. In the past, when Threelives knew that the upcoming tribulation would be a hard one to overcome, he made careful preparations, adding a vast quantity of treasures into his estate. He even melted down and extracted the essence of multiple Protocosmic spirit-treasures and invited multiple major powers over in order to forge it. Afterwards, he gave it up and had this little bear search for a successor for him."

"I ask for your guidance, Daofather." The giant yellow bear pressed his head repeatedly against the ground, his eyes brimming with tears. "Tell this little bear...where is Master? Is he alive or is he dead?"

The sound of his kowtowing rang out as he pressed his head against the ground repeatedly. Clearly, he desperately wanted to know this answer. He had waited countless ages for this day.

Thud. Thud. Thud.

Upon hearing this, a complicated look appeared on Patriarch Subhuti's face. He was silent for a moment, then said, "Threelives was my very best friend...my lifelong bosom friend! We met each other in the primordial chaos and adventured together. I was a bit more reserved, whereas

brother Threelives had a sharpness that couldn't be hidden! I enjoyed comprehending the cosmos and the various mysteries of the Heavenly Daos; I didn't involve myself in the various power struggles of the Primordial Era. Brother Threelives, however, desired to do battle against the heavens and the earth. He loved combat, and he had many Fiendgods who followed his command. He carved out an enormous territory within the Primordial World for himself, and was referred to within it as the Godking."

"Because very early on in his training, his arm had been severed, he trained painstakingly until he finally developed the utterly astonishing divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand]!"

"True Gods of Primordial Chaos are innately predisposed to enjoy battle. Even many Ki Refining Daofathers are unwilling to engage in life-and-death battles against True Gods of Primordial Chaos. After brother Threelives developed his [Starseizing Hand] divine ability, especially the Sixth Cycle of it, he reached an unfathomable level of power. He was extremely famous for his power even in the Primordial Era, and was ranked as one of the top True Gods."

Patriarch Subhuti's gaze was rather dreamy as he slowly spoke. "However...he was unable to comprehend a Heavenly Dao, and so his danger sense was comparatively weaker. That great tribulation that came...it was the greatest tribulation which had occurred ever since Pangu had established the universe. Threelives insisted on participating in it. I tried to stop him, but he was filled with a desire to fight; he wasn't willing to shrink back. He knew that it would be incredibly dangerous... but his hot-blooded nature made him decide on going. Before leaving, he wanted to ensure that his [Starseizing Hand] wouldn't be lost with him, and so he asked many friends to help him out. With their help, with his original estate as a raw material, and with many melted down treasures, he managed to create this new Starseizing Manor, meant to pass down his legacy."

"After he created the new Starseizing Manor, the tribulation came...and without any hesitation, he went to welcome the battle."

"That battle...I shrank back from it." Patriarch Subhuti's gaze was misty.

Ning, hearing this, couldn't help but feel his heart shake. Patriarch Subhuti had shrank back? The greatest tribulation to occur ever since Pangu had created the universe?

"That tribulation, the greatest tribulation since Pangu had created the universe...the very first parts of it caused the Primordial World to shatter. Countless experts and Fiendgods fell. Figures that were even more powerful than Threelives fell as well." Patriarch Subhuti sighed and shook his head. "Miserable. It was miserable. Threelives loved battle, and so of course he took part. His divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], truly was one of the most supreme of grand divine abilities; even Nuwa herself praised its power. Threelives fought like a man possessed, and multiple Fiendgod Daofathers perished by his hand. As for myself, I relied on the [Dream of the Three Realms] to watch the battle; I didn't participate."

"This divine ability was forged from Threelives' innate love for battle, as well as some guidance from both Pangu and Nuwa. Only then was this divine ability developed. The creation of a divine ability requires talent. Although I have created far more divine abilities than Threelives, I've never been able to create one that was comparable to the [Starseizing Hand]." Patriarch Subhuti looked towards Ning. "For such a divine ability to have passed down to you...no matter what, you cannot let it sink into the dust and disappear."

Ning nodded repeatedly.

So Daoist Threelives had relied on the [Starseizing Hand] to kill multiple Fiendgod Daofathers. From what Patriarch Subhuti was saying, this divine ability truly was incredibly terrifying.

The giant yellow bear, however, felt his heart shake upon hearing these words. "Daofather, my master, he..."

Ning looked towards Patriarch Subhuti as well. Was Daoist Threelives alive or dead? This was a question that he had wanted to know for a long time as well.

“Little bear...” Patriarch Subhuti looked at the giant yellow bear. He let out a soft sigh.

The giant yellow bear’s heart instantly trembled. His face changed, and he repeatedly pressed his head against the ground, kowtowing so hard that deep thudding sounds could be heard. “Please inform me, Daofather. Is Master dead or is he alive?”

“Little bear...actually, in your heart, you’ve known the answer all along. Why must you ask?” Patriarch Subhuti shook his head.

# Chapter 3: The Patriarch Accepts a Disciple

“I...” The giant yellow bear looked at the Patriarch.

“He died. He died long ago. He died within that tribulation.” The Patriarch shook his head. “Given Threelives’ temperament, if he was still alive, how could he not come back for you? How could he have let you drift through countless ages by yourself? Little bear, you clearly knew the truth...you just weren’t willing to believe it.”

Drip! Drip!

One teardrop after another fell onto the ground. The giant yellow bear’s kneeling body was shaking. He let out an agonized moan. “Nnnrragh...”

The agonized cry caused Ning’s own heart to feel sour as well.

“Master...master...master...” The giant yellow bear raised his head, howling madly. Daoist Threelives was like his father. Only a long time later did the kneeling bear say, “Forgive this little bear for his earlier outburst.”

“Alright,” the Patriarch said, “You can go back to the Starseizing Manor. You cannot break away from the Starseizing Manor for now.”

“Yes.” The giant yellow bear responded respectfully, then disappeared, having once more returned to the underwater estate.

Although Ning felt moved by the depths of the feelings the spirit of the underwater estate had for Daoist Threelives, he had noticed a few puzzling points. Since the giant yellow bear was the spirit of the estate... why did he seem like he was a living creature? He even shed tears? And the Patriarch had even said that he couldn’t break away from the Starseizing Manor yet? Could it be that he could in the future?

However, given that the spirit of the estate had already been within it for countless years without breaking free, it probably would take it a very, very long time before succeeding.

“Ji Ning.” The Patriarch looked at Ning. “Threelives is dead. I will teach you the Dao in his place. Are you willing to take me as your teacher?”

Ning immediately fell to his knees. “Your disciple greets you, Master!”

“Mm.” The Patriarch revealed a hint of a smile. “From today onwards, you shall be one of the honorary disciples of my school. Once you become a Celestial Immortal after your tribulation, you shall become my personal disciple.”

“Yes,” Ning said respectfully.

“There aren’t too many rules in my school. Just two.”

“One: You must not be disobedient and unfilial.”

“Two: Without my permission, in the outside world you cannot say that I am your master,” the Patriarch said. “If you violate these rules...for a lesser infraction, I will kill you, wipe your memory, and return you to the cycle of reincarnation. For a severe infraction, I will destroy your soul. For an extremely severe infraction...I will make your soul suffer an eternity of pain through truefire.”

Ning said respectfully, “Your disciple understands. Then...when can I say that I am your disciple?”

“When the time comes, you shall naturally be permitted,” the Patriarch said with a laugh. “Alternately, if you can reach your eldest apprentice-brother’s level of power, you can also tell whoever you please.”

Ning was secretly speechless. Eldest apprentice-brother? He was the number one expert amongst the many disciples. Even the white-robed Lord Jiang sighed at his own inferiority. How could it possibly be easy for him to reach such a level of power?

“As for whether or not you act virtuously or evilly in the future, I won’t interfere. I only ask that you act in accordance with your true nature,” the Patriarch said.

“Yes,” Ning said.

“Step forward. Come to stand in front of me,” the Patriarch instructed.

Ning was startled, but he moved forward, moving up the steps and walking to the Patriarch's side.

Suddenly...

The Patriarch stretched a finger out, tapping Ning on the center of his forehead. This was a simple tap, but it caught Ning completely off-guard. The tap landed directly on his forehead.

Rumble...

Ning's entire body turned soft. He sat down on the ground, then shut his eyes. He just sat there.

The Patriarch smiled as he looked at Ning. He then closed his own eyes as well, no longer paying any attention.

.....

A lonely corridor. The two sides of the corridor were covered with paintings of various sword-art techniques. The sword-arts in the paintings were even moving, displaying the profound mysteries within.

Ning walked forward through the corridor, staring at the endless sword-arts lining the two sides.

"These sword-arts are fairly ordinary; they aren't even comparable to the first level of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning walked forward.

He forgot why he had come here.

He forgot about the past.

All he knew was that he was walking deeper and deeper through this corridor.

The sword-arts on the two sides continuously moved about. They even managed to separate from the walls, swirling around Ning and allowing him to understand the mysteries within them.

"This place...has reached the power of the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]."

Ning continued to walk forward. After walking for a short period of

time, the sword-arts lining the halls began to demonstrate themselves in front of Ning, as though displaying the Dao of the Sword in fine detail. Ning had originally thought that he had a high level of comprehension of the Dao of the Sword, but he now realized that his insights were insufficiently detailed! Evil...dominating...arrogant...lonely...savage...all sorts of sword-arts were being displayed before him.

"This place...has reached the level of the third stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]."

.....

He had no idea how long he had been walking for.

"This place...has already reached the level of the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning continued to walk forward, constantly interacting with large amounts of marvelous sword-arts. Ning's foundation became increasingly solid and stable. Although he had long ago reached the level of the seventh stance, his insights into the Dao of the Sword were now significantly greater than before.

.....

After yet another long period of time.

"This is now at the level of the eighth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning felt that walking forward was becoming increasingly difficult. The countless sword-arts around him were constantly transmitting all sorts of profound mysteries to Ning. Ning was constantly being buffeted by them. This made his walking pace through the corridor to grow slower.

.....

"The level of the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." The sword-arts became increasingly unfathomable. Every single sword-art surrounding him was comparable to the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], and countless sword-arts were on display. Although Ning couldn't comprehend them, the fundamental mysteries of these sword-arts were firmly imprinted onto Ning's soul.

.....

As he walked forward, the techniques vastly surpassed the [Three-Foot Sword].

If there were more stances to the [Three-Foot Sword], then the later sword-arts were comparable to the tenth and the eleventh stance...

.....

Ning was completely submerged in the sea of swords. As he walked through the corridor, his heart and soul was completely filled with all sorts of sword-arts, and the increasingly unfathomable sword-arts brushed past his heart. Although he didn't understand them, this baptism by countless sword-arts caused Ning to become extremely familiar with the profound mysteries.

A long, long time passed.

It felt as though thousands of years had passed. Ning finally saw the end of this corridor. The end was an enormous, glowing streak of sword-light.

Ning didn't know why he was walking towards it. He didn't know whether or not he should stop. And so, just like that...he walked to the end of the corridor. His body became submerged into that giant sword-light.

Rumble...

A vast flood of mysteries flooded his soul.

The vastness of the Dao of the Sword...all of its mysteries...Ning was touching it all right now. The countless sword-arts he had interacted with earlier in the corridor also flashed through Ning's mind, causing his heart to become even closer to the Dao of the Sword.

"Eh?"

Ning suddenly opened his eyes.

He was still seated on the dais. Before him, seated on a prayer mat, was the loose-robed Patriarch. The Patriarch opened his eyes, smiling as he looked at Ning.

"I...this..." Ning stared at his surroundings. Everything felt so fake and illusory.

Only after a long period of time did his three decades of memories completely recover. The marvelous sword-arts that he had seen were now suppressed and hidden deep in Ning's soul.

"Master, I, I..." Ning nervously looked at the Patriarch. He felt as though thousands of years had passed. It had taken him so long to recover his decades of memories.

"What's wrong? Didn't you just doze off?" The Patriarch laughed.

"Master, how long did I sleep for?" Ning asked.

"Not too long. The amount of time for a stick of incense to burn down," the Patriarch said.

"But I...I feel as though thousands of years passed," Ning said.

The Patriarch said, "All I did was apply the [Thousand Year Dream] technique to let you truly experience the complete Dao of the Sword for once. From the very start of the Dao of the Sword...to the very end, the completion of the Dao of the Sword.

Right. The [Thousand Year Dream]. It truly did feel as though he had been in a dream. He had lost almost all of his cognitive abilities; all he could do was walk forward along the corridor in a daze.

"All I did was let you sense the complete Dao of the Sword for once. Your own Dao of the Sword hasn't risen in level that much," the Patriarch said. Ning, however, knew very well that this [Thousand Year Dream] had been tremendously beneficial to him.

Although he was still only able to execute the seventh stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], his understanding of the sword was now far more stable and solid than it had been before. And as he continued to move forward on the Dao of the Sword...he would feel a vague sense of recognition of what to do next. In fact, he would even have a vague sense of what it felt like to completely master the Dao of the Sword.

The path of Immortal cultivation was akin to a blind man using his sense of touch to search for rocks which would allow him to ford a river. Now that he had vague understanding of the path forward...he would be able to move through it much more quickly.

"Thank you, Master." Ning immediately fell to his knees.

"I just gave you a single helping hand. How much you can make of it is up to you." The Patriarch pointed gently, and a streak of light flew directly into Ning's mind.

Ning could sense a large amount of information pouring into his brain. Only after a long period of time did he become clear-minded again.

"The [Darknorth Sutra]? The four scrolls of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]?" Ning could sense the cultivation techniques that were now within his soul.

The first scroll of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was divided into the Houtian, Xiantian, and Zifu levels.

The second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was divided into the Wanxiang, Primal, and Void levels.

The third scroll was the Empyrean God scroll!

The fourth scroll was the True God scroll!

"The [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was created by Crimsonbright. Even Nuwa praised this technique, and it truly is an exquisite specimen that allows you to train all the way to the True God level," the Patriarch said. "As for the [Darknorth Sutra], it is a water-element Ki Refining method that was created by Daofather Carefree; it will allow you to train all the way to the level of Daofathers of the Great Firmament."

"One is Body Refining, the other is Ki Refining. In the future, they shall serve as your foundation," the Patriarch said.

"Yes." Ning was absolutely delighted. [Darknorth Sutra]? Something which Daofather Carefree had created? Just from this alone, he could tell

that this was one of the most supreme Ki Refining techniques of the Three Realms.

"In the Three Realms, Ki Refining Techniques and Body Refining Techniques aren't that valuable," the Patriarch said calmly. "Divine abilities and secret arts are much more valuable."

However, not even the Grand Xia Emperor possessed techniques like the [Darknorth Sutra]. Only someone on Patriarch Subhuti's level would dare describe it as 'not that valuable'.

"My Mount Innerheart has two Dao-Palaces which contain all things within them. Formation techniques, construct techniques, the Dao of the Sword, the Dao of the Saber, Taiji, lightning arts, lotus arts...it includes all types of techniques, as well as many divine abilities and secret arts. It will be up to you to acquire them, if you can," the Patriarch said calmly. "The Dao cannot be casually transmitted. If you wish to learn, then you must show the ability to learn."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said respectfully.

"Go, then. Calmly focus on studying the Dao, here in my Mount Innerheart. Only when your power is sufficient shall you be permitted to leave the mountain and return to your world of the Grand Xia," the Daofather said. "And when you leave my tutelage and leave the mountain, I shall give you two great gifts."

"Master...at what level will my power be 'enough'?" Ning asked.

"When you reach it, I will tell you," the Patriarch said.

Ning was instantly speechless. He was being told to study the Dao...but he didn't even know when he would be allowed to leave his master's tutelage.

"Go now," the Patriarch said, calmly closing his eyes. "Without my permission, you are not to come here and disturb me."

"Understood." Ning immediately left obediently.

Only after Ning left did the Patriarch open his eyes again. He gently

shook his head. "How long has it been? This is the first time I've ever been so talkative in front of a disciple. When I thought of Threelives, of that tremendous calamity we faced...my heart ended up being disturbed."

# Chapter 4: Divinity Palace, Three Realms Palace

Ji Ning walked out of the Daoist monastery. Outside of it was the white-robed Lord Jiang, Little Qing, and Uncle White.

“Master.” Little Qing had already transformed into an azure-robed maiden. She immediately called out in delight upon seeing him.

The white-robed Lord Jiang smiled as he looked at Ning. “I should now address you as junior apprentice-brother.”

“Senior apprentice-brother,” Ning called out in response.

The two novitiates outside the Daoist monastery all revealed looks of surprise. The white-robed Lord Jiang said with a laugh, “Clearwater and Whiteriver, Master has just accepted junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning as his disciple. The two of you need to remember this.”

“Greetings, uncle-master,” the two novices both said towards Ning.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh, “Clearwater and Whiteriver are the personifications of two Protocosmic spirit-treasures who always serve him. Normally, even if I wish to meet with Master, I must first notify him and receive his permission, but the two of them are always by his side. They are able to see Master far more often than disciples like ourselves.”

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing were all greatly shocked. Protocosmic spirit-treasures?

“Greetings, apprentice-nephews.” Ning naturally didn’t dare to show any hint of arrogance.

“No need to be so courteous, uncle-master. We are merely two Protocosmic spirit-treasures; it is incomparably difficult for us to even train in cultivation. How can we possibly compare to the two of you? Your training speed far surpasses us,” the novice named Clearwater said.

.....

Protocosmic Fiendgods were the Fiendgods who had been born by the heavens and the earths after Pangu had created the universe.

Protocosmic spirit-treasures were the magic treasures that were born by the heavens and the earths after Pangu had created the universe!

Immortal cultivators were generally only capable of making Mortal-ranked, Earth-ranked, Heaven-ranked, Immortal-ranked, and Pure Yang magic treasures! Even major powers were only capable of creating Pure Yang magic treasures; this was the limit for manufactured treasures. However, Pure Yang magic treasures possess souls; they could absorb energy from the natural world, comprehend the profound mysteries of the universe, and have a very tiny chance of breaking through to become a Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

"Junior apprentice-brother, the scenery here is quite beautiful, and it is also quite secluded. This can be your home, here at Mount Innerheart. Junior apprentice-brother, you can place your Immortal estate here." The white-robed Lord Jiang looked at Ning as they arrived within a secluded region. Creeks could be seen nearby, as well as ripe red spirit-fruit hanging from the branches of trees, as well as some fairy birds flying past.

Ning nodded. "Fine. Here it is, then."

He had come to the Tristar Crescent Abode in order to study the Dao. It didn't really matter where he lived. In addition, this place which Lord Jiang had helped him choose was indeed worthy of being an abode for an Immortal.

Whoosh. The Immortal estate descended, landing upon the grassy region.

"Mount Innerheart has spirit-fruit and wells. You can eat and drink from them as you please," Lord Jiang said. "There are many Diremonsters in this mountain, but you must remember that they cannot be killed. Those ordinary animals that are merely at the Houtian level, however, can be hunted, cooked, and eaten."

"Right." Ning nodded his head.

“We can only eat ordinary animals?” Little Qing was mumbling by herself.

“Senior apprentice-brother, Master told me earlier that Mount Innerheart has two Dao-Palaces that include everything within them,” Ning said.

“Right.” Lord Jiang nodded. “I’ll take you three over.”

.....

The place in the entire Tristar Crescent Abode with the most Fiendgods and Diremonsters was the Divinities Palace.

“That’s the Divinities Palace, one of the two Dao-Palaces.” Lord Jiang pointed to a nine-layered palace in the distance. “The Divinities Palace is divided into nine levels, each one containing all sorts of techniques, including those for formations, golems, the Dao of the Sword, evasion, lightning, magnetism...all sorts of divine abilities and secrets arts are within it. The higher up you go, the more profound the mysteries are. The ninth floor naturally has the most profound techniques.”

“Anyone can come to the Divinities Palace. All living creatures within Mount Innerheart can enter and learn. However, the Dao cannot be casually taught; there is a simple test that must be taken before studying a technique or secret art. Only after passing the test can you learn it,” Lord Jiang said.

Ning nodded and immediately asked, “Then my two spirit-beasts can study here as well?”

“Of course.” Lord Jiang nodded. “The techniques and arts within the Divinities Palace might not be the most profound and arcane ones possessed by the Tristar Crescent Abode, but they vastly surpass the Dao-Repositories of your Grand Xia world.”

“Do you have techniques and secret arts of the Grand Dao of Qiankun?” Little Qing was extremely delighted.

“Do you have many formations here?” The Whitewater Hound was excited as well.

“Far more than exist in your entire world of the Grand Xia,” Lord Jiang said confidently. “Even Daofather Crimsonbright is inferior to my master in terms of how many techniques he possesses. If you want to learn Ki Refining, Body Refining, formations, the Grand Dao of Qiankun, the Grand Dao of Taiji...you can learn all these things. All you need to do is pass that simple test.”

Little Qing and the Whitewater Hound instantly realized that their chance had come.

Actually, everyone within Mount Innerheart had some sort of connection to Daofather Subhuti. Some were his disciples or grand-disciples, while others were his disciples’ servants, spirit-beasts, etc. In short, they were generally all under Patriarch Subhuti’s command, which was why it made sense that everyone here within Mount Innerheart was permitted to learn these techniques.

“There are many humans here, but even more Diremonsters and Fiendgods.” Ning saw many figures on the ground outside the Divinities Palace. There were even avian Diremonsters flying about, as well as some Fiendgods that had extremely strange appearances.

“Senior apprentice-brother, what’s the other Dao-Palace?” Ning asked.

“Two Dao-Palaces – the Divinities Palace, and the Three Realms Palace. All living creatures within Mount Innerheart are permitted to enter the Divinities Palace, but only personal disciples of the Patriarch or those with special dispensation from the Patriarch are allowed to enter the Three Realms Palace!” Lord Jiang continued, “Junior apprentice-brother, since you are still weak, you are technically only an honorary disciple for now. However, Master treats you as he does his other personal disciples, and so you can enter the Three Realms Palace. Your two spirit-beasts, however, cannot.”

Ning nodded in understanding.

“The Three Realms Palace holds some of the most truly supreme divine abilities of the Three Realms, as well as some terrifying secret arts. These things cannot be casually taught. Even personal disciples are only

permitted to learn a few, at which point Master forbids them from learning any more,” Lord Jiang said. “To be able to learn a few is already a tremendous fortune; after all, for normal Empyrean Gods, being able to learn even one of these techniques is already enough to allow them to roam the Three Realms fearlessly.”

This caused Ning’s heart to be filled with a blazing fire. The power to roam the Three Realms without fear!

“And generally, when a student leaves his tutelage, Master will bestow a divine ability or secret art that is very suited to him,” Lord Jiang said with a laugh.

Ning now remembered...that his master had said that when he left, he would be given two great gifts.

“Divinities Palace, Three Realms Palace.” Lord Jiang sighed, “Junior apprentice-brother, you must remember that you must have the ability to acquire one of the techniques or secret arts from the ninth level of the Divinities Palace before you can enter the Three Realms Palace.”

“If you can’t even acquire the ninth level techniques, then you naturally aren’t qualified to enter the Three Realms Palace,” Lord Jiang said. “As for the other living creatures of Mount Innerheart, generally speaking, after they have the ability to learn ninth level techniques, they will eventually be shooed off the mountain.”

Ning nodded. This was something that was different for personal disciples! And although Ning was only an honorary disciple, his treatment was completely in line with that given to personal disciples.

“The Three Realms Palace.” Ning felt an itchiness in his heart.

“Junior apprentice-brother, spend some time and look around. If there’s anything you need, just come find me. I live just up the mountain; you can ask anyone and they’ll tell you where I am,” Lord Jiang said.

“Thank you, senior apprentice-brother,” Ning said with gratitude.

“A minor matter.” Lord Jiang left gracefully. He had long ago ascended past his apprenticeship and had reached the Pure Yang True Immortal

level. The main reason he continued to live at Mount Innerheart was because he liked the peaceful quiet of this place, and because he could occasionally listen to Patriarch Subhuti expound on the Dao. After all...at his level, everyone's main goal was to become a Daofather.

Daofathers were truly the most supreme figures of the Three Realms!

.....

"The Three Realms Palace is so tiny," Little Qing mumbled. "It looks completely unremarkable. It's a place that holds the most supreme divine abilities and most terrifying secret arts of the Three Realms; this Dao-Palace should be built to look a bit more imposing and have at least a bit of Immortal majesty."

Ning blinked as well. The distant 'Three Realms Palace' was just an ordinary little building, just ten or so meters high. Outside the building, there was a skinny old man that was lying down taking a nap, a fan across his chest. His slumbering snores were quite loud; even at this distance, Ning could hear everything clearly.

### The Divinities Palace.

Ning, Little Qing, and the Whitewater Hound arrived at the Divinities Palace. The humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods outside the Divinities Palace all looked at the three with curiosity.

"Who are these three? Why haven't I seen them before?"

"I've never seen them either. They must've just come to the mountain."

"I saw Patriarch Jiang leading them around earlier. Perhaps that fur-clad youth is a disciple which Patriarch Jiang accepted as a disciple."

"Their auras are very weak. It seems these three are at the Wanxiang level."

"Right. Quite weak."

The humans, monsters, and Fiendgods chatted amongst themselves, clearly not recognizing this group.

In front of the entrance to the Divinities Palace, there was a handsome

man in a white robe and who held a white fan in his hands. The handsome man languidly barked, “Hush.”

Instantly, everyone fell silent. All the humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods all fell silent. This handsome man was in charge of the Divinities Palace; of course they respected him! In addition, he was also an incredibly, terrifyingly powerful Primordial Fiendgod. His power was incomparably great, far greater than any of theirs.

“Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” The handsome man smiled and nodded towards Ning. “My name is Silvermoon. You may simply refer to me as senior apprentice-brother Silvermoon. I already know of your affairs.”

“Ji Ning greets you, senior apprentice-brother.” Ning could sense an incomparably terrifying aura emanating from this handsome man’s body, an aura comparable to the one which Empyrean God Seatapple had.

All of the humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods were completely stunned.

Junior apprentice-brother? That old demon Silvermoon had actually addressed the fur-clad kid as junior apprentice-brother? That meant...this fur-clad kid was Patriarch Subhuti’s disciple! For a mere Wanxiang Adept to become Patriarch Subhuti’s disciple...there was no question that the Patriarch viewed him with great favor. If he was to become a Celestial Immortal, he would definitely become a personal disciple.

“Right.” The white-robed, fan-holding man glanced at the many distant humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods. He said calmly, “All of you, listen up. This Ji Ning is the new disciple the Patriarch has just accepted. All of you need to be respectful. Those of you who should address him as uncle-master, do so. Those of you who should address him as Patriarch, do so as well.”

“Respectful greetings, uncle-master.”

“Respectful greetings, Patriarch.”

All of these mighty humans, Diremonsters, and Fiendgods were all

calling out to him with respect.

Ning stared at these figures. There were all at least at the Primal or Void levels. There were even quite a few Void-level Fiendgods and Godbeasts. Void-level Fiendgods...these were figures on the level of that Fiendgod he had met in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. For all of them to be obediently calling out to him as ‘uncle-master’ and ‘Patriarch’...Ning felt this was quite bizarre.

“Come in, junior apprentice-brother,” the white-robed man said.

Ning immediately turned and entered the Divinities Palace. The very first floor was filled with bookshelves and countless books. Atop one of the bookshelves, there was a line of large characters: “If you clean the mountain path of Mount Innerheart once, you can choose a technique at will.”

\*

1. Also known as the Grand Dao of Space per Book 11, Chapter 8.

# Chapter 5: Trials

"That's the requirement for learning these techniques and secret arts?" Ning stared in amazement at the line of characters above the bookshelf.

The Patriarch had told him previously as well that a simple trial would have to be passed before one could train in these techniques. Ning had already been prepared for this, and had the feeling that the trial would be easy, but...this was too easy. Just clean the mountain path once? It must be understood that everyone with access to the Divinities Palace was extraordinary; most likely, they'd be able to clean the mountain path in the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea.

Ning pulled out a sword-arts manual and flipped through it. He was instantly astonished. This was definitely at the level of the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] manual.

"Wow, this is an Immortal-ranked Ki Refining Technique!" Little Qing called out.

"This book on formations is definitely not inferior to the [Nine Scrolls on Formations]!" The Whitewater Hound grew excited as well.

Ning swept his gaze forward. The enormous bookshelves were simply brimming with books, and above all of them were the same line of characters - "If you clean the mountain path of Mount Innerheart once, you can choose a technique at will." Clearly, the requirement for choosing any book on this first floor of the Divinities Palace was the same.

The handsome white-robed man shook his head and laughed. "In Mount Innerheart, there is an old saying...the techniques and secret arts of the Divinities Palace, when learned, shall allow you to become a Celestial Immortal or Empyrean God. The divine abilities and secret arts of the Three Realms Palace, however, shall allow you to be able to roam and dominate the Three Realms."

"Master learns of the affairs of the Three Realms through his dreaming, and so he is naturally incredible in collecting divine abilities and secret

arts. The number of techniques and arts he has collected here in the Divinities Palace from ancient times til now is simply uncountable. Even at the lowest level here on this first floor, the techniques present are considered quite excellent in ordinary worlds,” the white-robed Silvermoon said.

Ning nodded gently. Indeed. Through the [Dream of the Three Realms], his master was indeed quite astonishingly good at collecting various sorts of techniques.

“Senior apprentice-brother, so this is the trial for learning first level techniques?” Ning pointed at the line of characters.

“Right. When cleaning the mountain paths, you have to personally sweep it using a broom. Most likely even Immortal cultivators will need half a day to clean the many levels and layers,” Silvermoon said.

Ning nodded. If one could use techniques it would be much faster, but if one had to use a broomstick, it would indeed take considerably more time.

“The first level is too simple. Junior apprentice-brother, follow me,” Silvermoon said.

“Alright.”

.....

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all followed Silvermoon, the manager of the Divinities Palace, up the stairs and to the second floor of the palace.

The bookshelves of the Divinities Palace also all had a line of characters above them. The line said: “Wipe down every single table within the entire Divinities Palace and you can choose a technique at will.”

“...so easy.” Ning blinked, lowering his head to stare at the sword-arts manuals. “These are already comparable to some of the supreme manuals the Black-White College has.”

“What a precious place.” The Whitewater Hound was completely

stunned as well.

"And this is just the second level? I've never even seen such deep and profound techniques!" Little Qing's eyes were completely crimson.

"Hahaha, come, let's go see the third level," Silvermoon laughed.

.....

They arrived at the third level. Above the bookcases were a line of characters: "Get rid of the weeds within a hundred kilometers and you can choose a technique at will."

The nearby Silvermoon said, "You have to pull up every single weed manually. To pull up all the weed within a hundred kilometers, one weed at a time...that should take at least a month or so."

"Getting harder." Ning nodded. He was beginning to notice that each progressing level had a higher level of difficulty. Although it was all just manual labor, it took up time.

"Pulling up a hundred kilometers of weed for a single technique...then pulling ten or a hundred would need..." Little Qing muttered to herself.

"Let's look at the fourth floor." Ning led them upwards once more.

.....

The bookshelves here had a new line of characters above them: "Personally plant ten thousand fruit trees, and you can choose a technique at will."

"This seems a bit easier than the weeding," Little Qing said in a puzzled manner. Ning nodded as well. Weeding had to be done within a hundred kilometers; there would definitely be far more.

"Ah, you don't understand. These fruit trees are not the fruit trees of the mortal worlds. These are fruit trees that bear Immortal fruit or spirit-fruit; they naturally require tremendous care when planting. Even though Immortal cultivators have incredible abilities, for them to carefully plant one tree at a time by hand...ten thousand will take at least half a year," Silvermoon said.

“Half a year?”

“So much hard work for half a year, just to learn a single technique? And this is just the fourth level, right?” Little Qing stared.

Ning was quite calm; he continued to the fifth floor.

.....

One floor after another.

The trial of the first floor only required half a day’s worth of work.

The trial for the second floor required three days.

The trial for the third floor required a month.

The trial for the fourth floor required half a year.

The trial for the fifth floor required three years.

The trial for the sixth floor required twenty full years.

The trial for the seventh floor required a century.

.....

“And here is the eighth floor.” Although Ning was filled with questions, he still looked calm on the surface as he arrived on the eighth floor of the Divinities Palace.

The number of books on this floor was clearly much lower. The Ki Refining techniques here had already surpassed the Pure Yang level and were at the Daofather level.

The divine abilities and secret arts here...any one of them could serve as a foundational treasure for the likes of the imperial Xiamang clan.

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing simultaneously turned their gazes towards the line of characters above the bookshelves. The line of words read: “Serve as novitiate guards for the Tristar Crescent Abode for a thousand years and you can choose a technique at will.”

“The seventh floor only required a hundred years, but this one requires a thousand.” Little Qing couldn’t help but say, “How long are we going to

have to stay here at the Tristar Crescent Abode before we can leave it?"

"But the techniques and secret arts here...I imagine that not even the most treasured techniques of the Youngflame clan or the Northmont clan are so deep and profound." Ning was still quite calm. "Come. Let us go to the ninth floor."

.....

The ninth floor was the final floor of the Divinities Palace.

On this floor, there were only three bookshelves, and they didn't have that many books on them. Clearly, however...these were truly standouts. Any book here would allow the practitioner to become a powerful expert of the Three Realms. They could absolutely serve as pinnacle techniques...and for normal disciples here at Mount Innerheart, these were the ultimate techniques available!

Only personal disciples and those with special permission from Patriarch Subhuti could go to the Three Realms Palace!

"Eh?" Ning discovered to his astonishment that the bookshelves were completely black, with no characters above them.

"Why aren't there any characters? Can it be that the techniques here on the ninth floor cannot be taught?" Little Qing was puzzled.

Ning turned his head to look towards the nearby Silvermoon. "Senior apprentice-brother, the trials for the first eight floors of the Divinities Palace require increasingly longer periods of time to complete...can it be that there is no trial for the ninth floor? And...can it be that the only way to learn the techniques of the Divinities Palace is to engage in manual labor? The eighth floor requires one to be a novitiate for a thousand years to learn a technique...does that mean if you want to learn ten techniques, you would have to spend ten thousand years?"

Ning had been planning to train for just a few decades or a century and then return to the world of the Grand Xia. This was his agreement with Yu Wei! To spend ten thousand years here at Mount Innerheart? He would be arriving far too late!

"Haha...you are quite clever, junior apprentice-brother." Silvermoon waved his feather fan, then said leisurely, "The Divinities Palace actually has two types of trials. The first type consists of manual labors which naturally are not difficult at all; all one needs to do is spend some time. For those slightly dumber cultivators with poorer comprehension abilities, this is usually the type of trial they will choose. A thousand years as a novice to learn the powerful techniques of the eighth floor? It is worth it."

Ning nodded. After one became a Primal, one's lifespan became limitless; all one had to do was be able to overcome the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. To spend a thousand years on a single technique was indeed worth it.

"You can view this as a gift which Master gave to Mount Innerheart. Although it is said that the Dao cannot be casually taught, Master only required these simple 'trials' be passed," Silvermoon said. "But of course, for truly peerless geniuses who have superior comprehension there is naturally no need to engage in all this manual labor. There are other trials for such individuals."

"What trials?" Ning asked.

Silvermoon laughed. "Junior apprentice-brother, didn't you notice that in the empty region outside the Divinities Palace, where all those humans, monsters, and Fiendgods were congregating, there were some restrictive formations and spells?"

Ning thought back to what he had seen, then nodded. "Right. That region was indeed marked with some formations and restrictive runes."

"That place is the place for battling," Silvermoon said. "Master created nine golems at nine different levels of power. Anyone who is capable of defeating the first golem is allowed to pick a technique from the first level of the Divinities Palace at will."

"If you defeat the second golem once, you can choose a technique from the second floor at will. If you beat it twice, you can choose two techniques. Three times, pick three...and so on."

"If you beat the third golem, you can choose from the third floor."

"The principles are the same for the ninth golem; if you defeat it, you can naturally choose a technique from the ninth floor."

Silvermoon smiled as he looked at Ning. "Understand, junior apprentice-brother?"

"This trial is quite simple as well. Understood." Ning nodded, then asked with suspicion, "If you beat it once you will gain one technique, if you beat it twice you will gain two...can it be that the more times you fight, the more powerful the golem will become?"

"When you actually go fight them, you'll know the answer." Silvermoon no longer gave any more information on this. "But remember; these fights are meant to test your insights into the Dao! Thus, all divine abilities are forbidden, as well as any formations, forbidden arts, etc. I hear you are a Sword Immortal. If so, then you are only permitted to use your sword and sword-arts. Unleash the full power and sharpness of your sword-arts."

Ning nodded.

"By doing manual labor, one can learn techniques up to the eighth floor. Only by defeating the ninth golem, however, can the ninth floor techniques be learned." Silvermoon looked at Ning. "Junior apprentice-brother, once you defeat the ninth golem and learn a ninth floor technique, you can go to the Three Realms Palace."

"Right." Ning nodded, then asked, "Senior apprentice-brother, which golem should I test myself against for now?"

"There isn't much point in acquiring those weaker sword-arts manuals; it's best to start from a higher place! Since Master was willing to accept you as his disciple, I imagine that you are a rare, peerless genius as well... how about this? Why don't you give the sixth golem a try?" This was Silvermoon's best guess, as he didn't know anything about Ning's level of power. Still, he could guess that Ning was most likely a supreme genius.

"The sixth golem? The sixth floor?" Ning thought back to the sixth floor; the sword-arts manuals there were already even more profound

than the full nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]! Every sword-arts manual there surpassed the best that the Black-White College had to offer.

"But I'm only at the Wanxiang level," Ning said, a bit worried. "Isn't that a bit..."

"Don't worry. The nine golems which Master created are extraordinary. They will release different levels of power, based on the strength of their foes. Since you are at the Wanxiang level, the elemental ki these golems will use shall also be at the Wanxiang level. If you were a Void-level Earth Immortal, then the elemental ki these golems would use would also be Void-level. This is why I said this is a test of your comprehension of the Dao! It doesn't matter if you are a Wanxiang Adept, a Primal Daoist, or a Void-level Earth Immortal," Silvermoon said.

Ning instantly felt reassured. "Good. Then I'll give the sixth golem a try."

"Come, let's go to the testing ground." Silvermoon immediately lead Ning down from the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace to the empty field outside.

# Chapter 6: Puny

Outside the Divinities Palace.

“All of you, step back,” Silvermoon instructed. All of the disciples of Mount Innerheart present all hurriedly departed from the empty region.

Silvermoon waved his arm, and a golem that was more than three meters tall appeared out of nowhere. The golem’s body seemed completely metallic, and its arm had six hoops around it.

“Junior apprentice-brother, this is the sixth golem,” Silvermoon said.

“Thank you, senior apprentice-brother.” Ning was filled with anticipation.

Silvermoon, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing immediately left the dueling grounds. As for the other Mount Innerheart disciples, they all revealed looks of amazement and curiosity.

“Uncle-master is going to duel a golem.”

“The Patriarch is about to show his power!”

“The Little Patriarch is immediately challenging the sixth golem upon arriving at the power. I imagine that he’s pretty confident in being able to defeat it. He’s only a Wanxiang Adept, but he actually dares to fight the sixth golem. What level of insight into the Dao must the Little Patriarch have reached?! No wonder Patriarch Subhuti took him as a disciple. He truly is a peerless monster.”

“I’ve been on the mountain for thousands of years, but I’m still unable to defeat the sixth golem. I had to serve as a novitiate in order to acquire an eighth level Divinities Palace technique,” an old Void-level Diremonster growled.

“Challenging the sixth golem as soon as he comes up the mountain? Formidable, formidable indeed. Even in the major world from whence I come, it is rare for such a peerless genius to come in countless lifetimes.”

These humans, monsters, and Fiendgods all spoke out in praise. As they

saw it, since Ning had been chosen by Patriarch Subhuti as his disciple, he was assuredly extraordinary. In addition, that old demon Silvermoon, the manager of this Divinities Palace, was also a personal disciple of Patriarch Subhuti. Since he chose the sixth golem for Ning, he probably felt confident that Ning could beat it.

“Formidable.”

“A peerless genius.”

“Incredible.”

The disciples of Mount Innerheart were all filled with eagerness as they waited to watch.

.....

The trial grounds. Ning was exchanging stares with the distant sixth golem. From far away, Little Qing was cheering, “Master, master, beat the snot out of that golem!”

“Little Wanxiang kid, if you want to beat me, bring out your power.” The three meter tall golem growled, then waved his hand as a longsword suddenly appeared within it.

“Good.” A Darknorth sword appeared in each of Ning’s hands as well.

“Kill!” Ning instantly charged forward.

All of the disciples of Mount Innerheart present, as well as the old demon Silvermoon, were watching this battle carefully.

After having mastered the Dao-Path of the Gale, Ning’s speed had become incredibly fast; he blew forward like a gust of wind and arrived before the sixth golem, and his Darknorth swords instantly struck out like two streaks of dazzling sword-light.

After experiencing the [Thousand Year Dream], Ning’s sword-arts had clearly become firmer and more stable, and his movements were more pure and exquisite as well.

Bang!

The golem struck out with its longsword, and the earth itself seemed to tremble. The longsword actually came smashing down with the weight of a mountain, and Ning could even see with his naked eyes the vague illusion of massive mountains appearing around it. The might and aura of this sword stance caused Ning to feel completely awestruck.

"Not good. The difference in power is too great!" Ning, upon seeing the illusion of massive mountains which had manifested around the golem's sword-chop, instantly felt completely unable to resist. The profoundness of the attack's formless Dao...

His own two chopping streaks of sword-light became as thin as silken, becoming incomparably soft.

BOOM!!!

The golem's longsword smashed down upon Ning's twin Darknorth swords. A surge of invincible power crushed downwards, and Ning was sent flying through the air like a meteor. He only stopped when he arrived at the edge of the trial grounds, where a nearly invisible barrier hovered in the air. The barrier blocked Ning's fall, but his two Darknorth swords were also sent flying into the air, and they then smashed against the restrictive barrier and fell to the ground.

"I admit defeat," Ning hurriedly called out. The flesh on his two hands had been completely split open, and blood was leaking everywhere.

Just a single exchange of blows...but his sword had actually been knocked flying. This difference in power was simply too enormous.

"Uh..."

"Um..."

"But..."

The many disciples of Mount Innerheart who were watching outside the trial grounds, be they human, monster, or Fiendgod, all were completely flabbergasted at what they had just seen. They blinked.

As they saw it, Ning was the chosen of Patriarch Subhuti, and so he

surely must be extraordinary! Even when these other disciples had first arrived on the mountain, they were generally able to defeat the second or third golem. Some of the more powerful ones were able to defeat the fourth or even the fifth golem. None of the ones present had been able to defeat the sixth golem right away, but over the course of Mount Innerheart's many years of history there had been some who had defeated the sixth golem upon arriving.

The statuses of these disciples were far lower than Ning's. Ning was the Patriarch's disciple! All of the other disciples believed that Ning was going to make a miracle happen.

But unfortunately...this 'exceptionally extraordinary' Ji Ning was actually defeated in one blow. He wasn't even able to fight back!

"Master!" Little Qing looked towards Ning, tight feelings appearing in her chest. Her master was the number one figure in his Conclave, and she had thought for certain that her master was going to dazzle everyone with his power upon arriving at Mount Innerheart. But he had actually been defeated so miserably. "Master must be feeling horrible right now! And there were so many Mount Innerheart disciples watching! That despicable old bastard, Silvermoon...he's the one who told Master to fight against the sixth golem!"

"Ning, child..." The Whitewater Hound had not expected this either.

"Uh." The fan-wielding Silvermoon hastily waved his arm, collecting up the sixth golem. He hurriedly ran over. "Junior apprentice-brother, this, uh, I didn't, I...I didn't know exactly how strong you were, but since Master took you on as a new disciple, I..."

Silvermoon hadn't done this on purpose. He knew exactly how stringent and exacting Patriarch Subhuti's requirements for accepting new disciples were. Those who were accepted as disciples before becoming Celestial Immortals or Empyrean Gods were all incredible talented, so monstrously skilled as to cause utter terror! Thus, he had guessed that this new junior apprentice-brother of his, Ji Ning, should be able to give the sixth golem a good fight. Even if he were to be defeated, he should

have been able to fight for quite a long time before losing. He hadn't expected at all that Ning would be defeated with a single blow and that he wouldn't be able to fight back at all.

"It isn't your fault, senior apprentice-brother." Ning shook his head. He could tell that the spectating humans, monsters, and Fiendgods all had a look of surprise, puzzlement, and even hidden disdain in their eyes. Clearly, these Immortal cultivators cared about strength the most; even though his status was high, if he wasn't strong enough, others would still look down on him in their hearts.

"It was simply that I was not strong enough," Ning said. "The sixth golem truly does vastly surpass my current limits."

"It was my fault," Silvermoon said hurriedly. This junior apprentice-brother had suffered such a huge defeat in his first trial upon coming up the mountain...and he had been the one who had chosen the opponent. He naturally felt extremely ashamed. He hurriedly said, "Given the sword techniques you displayed, you definitely would have no problems defeating the third golem, and as for the fourth golem...you have a chance as well. Which one would you like to choose?"

"The fourth golem," Ning said.

"How about you take a break, then fight?" Silvermoon asked.

Ning shook his head and chuckled. "I was instantly defeated in that earlier battle. I used up almost no divine power at all, as a result. There's no need to rest."

Silvermoon, seeing the smile on Ning's face, couldn't help but nod mentally to himself. This junior apprentice-brother had an impressive mentality; he had been defeated in front of so many watchers during his very first trial, but he remained quite calm.

"Alright." Silvermoon nodded, then waved his arm. Yet another golem, a fiery red golem, appeared within the battlefield. This golem had four circlets around its arm.

.....

"This uncle-master, Ji Ning, seems to be ordinary in power. He was actually completely unable to fight back against the sixth golem."

"Right. He's quite puny."

"Puny my ass. When you came up the mountain, you probably would've been defeated by the sixth golem in one blow as well."

"I'm just my Master's spirit-beast, while Ji Ning is the Old Patriarch's disciple. I even have to address him as Patriarch! How can you compare the two of us? When I first arrived, I was also able to defeat the fourth golem."

"Look, it is starting."

"The Patriarch is starting to fight against the fourth golem."

The disciples of Mount Innerheart had all originally been filled with admiration towards Ning, but now they found out...that this Ji Ning was rather so-so! In fact, compared to the rest of them when they had first arrived in the mountain, Ning's performance was average at best. He was completely unremarkable!

Actually...many of these other disciples were the personal disciples that had been accepted by True Immortals or Empyrean Gods! They, too, were truly first-rate geniuses which the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods had chosen from throughout the Three Realms. Not even the likes of Adept Blackstone or Adept Ninedeaths would necessarily be chosen by True Immortals or Empyrean Gods; from this, one could imagine how much talent and comprehension ability these disciples possessed.

Some disciples were disciples of Celestial Immortals!

Some were spirit-beasts!

Others were Fiendgod servants!

Some of them had merely been at the Wanxiang level when arriving at the mountain. Some had already reached the Primal level. Some had even reached the Void level!

Some Void-level Fiendgods had lived for an incredibly long time, and

were born with a very high level of insight into the Dao. It was normal for them to be able to defeat the fifth golem or sixth golem. As for the disciples of Celestial Immortals, they were also quite extraordinarily talented, and could absolutely compare to the likes of Cangwu Jiu or Adept Blackstone.

Thus...the vast majority of these disciples who had to refer to Ning as ‘uncle-master’ or ‘Patriarch’ were, in reality, the peerless geniuses of the major worlds they came from! Some were even more monstrously formidable than that!

“But this Patriarch’s sword-arts aren’t bad. It seems he should be able to defeat the fourth golem.”

“Right. He should be able to beat the fourth golem...but just barely.”

“Right. Just barely.”

The disciples of Mount Innerheart all gave their evaluation. Towards this Ji Ning, the disciple of the Old Patriarch who had an incredibly high status...they no longer felt too much reverence for him.

.....

Slash!

A streak of sword-light plunged into the golem’s chest. It didn’t even sink in a single inch before it became unable to go in any deeper.

The golem came to a complete halt. It stared at Ning unmovingly, then said in a low voice, “You won.”

These golems were non-living creatures; even Void-level Fiendgods that fought against them would be unable to destroy them. Thus...being able to break through their outer layer of protection was enough to symbolize victory.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you can now go to the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace and choose a technique at will,” the fan-holding Silvermoon said with a smile as he walked over. With a wave of his hand, he collected the golem again.

Ning smiled. Fortunately, he had experienced the [Thousand Year Dream] earlier; his sword-arts had indeed stabilized and become more firm, and his execution of them had become more profound and unpredictable as well. That was the only reason why he was able to defeat the fourth golem. Otherwise...he would have probably only been able to beat the third golem.

This was as he had expected. After all, he had been forbidden from using any divine abilities, resulting in his greatest source of power, the [Starseizing Hand], being unusable. His power would naturally be much lower as a result!

Although he had become the champion of his Conclave of Immortal Destiny, he was actually a bit weaker than Cangwu Jiu, Xiamang Zishan, and the others when it came to his comprehension of the Dao. He had only become champion thanks to the [Starseizing Hand].

"Senior apprentice-brother, when ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart first arrive at the mountain, which golem are they generally able to beat?" Ning asked.

"The newcomers are sometimes a bit weaker while sometimes a bit stronger. On the whole, they are on par with you, I suppose. However, they have generally trained for centuries before arriving, while some have trained for thousands or tens of thousands of years," Silvermoon said. As they chatted, the sound around them was blocked from transmitting to others.

Ning laughed. "Given how many years the ordinary disciples have been in the mountain, they are definitely more powerful than they were in the past. It seems I am the weakest person here at Mount Innerheart."

Still...Ning continued to feel complete confidence in himself. He had only trained for thirty years, and had just arrived at the mountain. After a hundred years, he would definitely be able to surpass them all! And he also had the [Starseizing Hand] in reserve! In these trials against golems, since his divine abilities were unusable, his greatest advantage had been neutralized.

Still...no matter what, compared to the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart, he was at the bottom of the barrel.

A thirty thousand meter tower starts from the ground. He still had to work hard!

# Chapter 7: Thirty Years at Mount Innerheart

"Junior apprentice-brother, how long have you been training for?" Silvermoon asked.

"More than thirty years," Ji Ning said.

Silvermoon instantly began to laugh. "Ah, no wonder! That explains it. So you've only been training for around thirty years. For you to be able to defeat the fourth golem despite having trained for such a short period of time...I trust that in the future, here at Mount Innerheart, your rate of improvement will be similarly astonishing."

Ning smiled. "Thank you for your kind words, senior apprentice-brother."

.....

Under the gazes of the many humans, monsters, and Fiendgods, Ji Ning and Silvermoon stepped into the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace. The profoundness of any of the sword-arts manuals located on the fourth floor was comparable to the complete nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]!

"This truly is a blessed land for learning the Dao." Ning flipped through the abridged versions of the sword-arts manuals, which included some of the preliminary parts to each technique. His eyes and eyebrows danced expressively as he read. "So many sword-arts...this place represents the collective enlightenment gained by countless Sword Immortals of the Three Realms. My own sword-arts will definitely improve dramatically after I draw from the wisdom of so many other Sword Immortals."

.....

And so, Ning's life of learning the Dao at Mount Innerheart had begun.

If he wanted to leave his master's tutelage, he had to at least be able to defeat the ninth golem and acquire a ninth-level technique from the Divinities Palace. Only then could he enter the Three Realms Palace, and

only then could he leave. This was a prerequisite! He had to be trained as a personal disciple would be trained, which meant that he had to be able to enter the Three Realms Palace and learn the truly powerful divine abilities located within it. This was the most fundamental of expectations which Patriarch Subhuti had for Ning as his apprentice; Ning understood this quite well.

Ning and Yu Wei had agreed that they would reunite in the future in the Grand Xia world. And so...he had to enter the Three Realms Palace as soon as he could!

Ning didn't want to spend centuries or millennia here at Mount Innerheart; if he truly did spend thousands of years here, then what in the world would happen to the people he cared about in the Grand Xia such as Yu Wei, Autumn Leaf, Mu Northson, or Yuchi Xiyue?

"I have to defeat the ninth golem as soon as I can, ideally within a few decades." This was Ning's goal for himself, but he knew very well how incredibly difficult this goal would be. "I can't allow myself to be distracted whatsoever during this period of time at Mount Innerheart. Lotus techniques, divine will techniques...I'll put them all to one side for now. Here in the Divinities Palace, I will exclusively focus on sword-arts manuals!"

Sword-arts, focused on attacks! This was Ning's decision!

.....

Time slowly flowed on.

Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Little Qing all spent their time training on Mount Innerheart. And in fact, the Whitewater Hound and Little Qing were even more excited than Ning to be here!

"What should I do? The third golem defeats us with utter ease," Little Qing said helplessly.

"It seems that we might not even be able to beat the second golem," the Whitewater Hound said helplessly as well.

The disciples of Mount Innerheart were almost all incomparably

talented monsters who came from throughout the Three Realms. Some of the others were spirit-beasts of Celestial Immortals who had trained for a very long time. By comparison, the Whitewater Hound and Little Qing had trained for a very short period of time.

"There's nothing we can do. Let's go do manual labor," the Whitewater Hound said.

"That's our only option." Little Qing nodded as well.

And so, both of them went to accept the manual labor 'trials'. They spent nearly a full month manually deweeding the surrounding hundred kilometers of land. Only then were they allowed to choose a third level technique from the Divinities Palace.

The techniques on the third floor of the Divinities Palace...any one of them when placed within the Black-White College would become the most treasured technique of the College!

"Hahaha, so someone like me can actually acquire a technique like this!" Little Qing snatched up a copy of the [Qiankun Sword Song] with absolute excitement. "I can now finally, truly train on the Grand Dao of Qiankun."

"These are the writings of a Celestial Immortal on formations?" The Whitewater Hound was holding a book on formations. He, too, was incomparably excited.

Both of them were actually extremely gifted. Uncle White was a Whitewater Hound; although in other aspects he was rather ordinary for a Godbeast, in one aspect, he was exceptional – his intelligence!

Little Qing, in turn, had absolutely astonishing talent in the Grand Dao of Qiankun. She was even able to use the Void Blink (spatial teleportation) technique at the Xiantian level! Although at that point in time, there was no way Little Qing could actually understand the profound mysteries and principles behind spatial teleportation, this was her innate ability as a Godbeast. All she had to do was be able to touch upon just the slightest bit of this Grand Dao and she would be able to teleport. She didn't need to actually understand it; just brushing against

the Grand Dao of Qiankun allowed it!

However, neither of two had ever had a truly good teacher! Ning had the help of the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate, and also had the guidance of Immortal Diancai. Uncle White and Little Qing, however, had to work hard to study on their own!

Having arrived at Mount Innerheart, however, everything had changed! They had a chance to interact with so many talented humans, monsters, and Fiendgods. The Void-level Fiendgods in particular had lived extremely long lives, and their level of experience was definitely not inferior to Immortal Diancai's. For the sake of giving Ning face, they would often give pointers to Little Qing and Uncle White. And occasionally, the two would even have a chance to ask the likes of the white-robed Lord Jiang or the old demon Silvermoon for some advice as well!

But most importantly of all...

Patriarch Subhuti had begun to lecture on the Dao!

Patriarch Subhuti rarely expounded on the Dao; sometimes, ten thousand years would pass without a single lecture. However, ever since he had taken on Ning as a disciple, Patriarch Subhuti immediately began to give far more open lectures on the Dao than before; in fact, he would expound on the Dao almost every month! This was a habit for Patriarch Subhuti; generally speaking, after taking in a new disciple, he would often expound on the Dao with great frequency for a time. But if he didn't take in a new disciple? He would only expound on the Dao when he was in the mood for it.

After all, the Old Patriarch only truly valued his personal disciples enough to do it. As for the other disciples...they generally didn't even have a chance to meet or speak with the Old Patriarch.

Thus, all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart were in a state of collective excitement. Even several True Immortals or Empyrean Gods would occasionally come over to listen.

"The Daofather lives up to his reputation." The Whitewater Hound was currently filled with the utmost of excitement. "Listening to the

Daofather expound on the Dao once is more helpful than me ruminating by myself for a century. So many of the questions in my mind have been explained, and I have now mastered a Dao-Path!"

"The Daofather must have completely mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun. His casual mentions regarding it have caused me to comprehend so much. I can now even teleport out of a spacialocked region!" Little Qing was excited as well.

.....

One year after another passed. The two of them had spent another half year doing manual tasks and had acquired a technique from the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace.

These manual tasks just took up time; they didn't need to actually use up too much of their mental energy on them. They were able to completely focus on training in the Dao while carrying out the menial jobs!

They then spent another three years carrying out menial jobs, thus acquiring a fifth level technique from the Divinities Palace.

And then they spent another twenty years before finally acquiring a sixth level technique from the Divinities Palace!

The sixth level techniques would be considered amongst the most supreme of techniques in the Grand Xia Dynasty! Almost all of them were created by Celestial Immortals, and some were even created by Pure Yang True Immortals.

The twenty-sixth year at Mount Innerheart.

"AHAHAHA! I'm invincible! INVINCIBLE!" As rain poured down from the skies, Little Qing ran around wildly in circles around Ning's Immortal estate, her body flickering and flashing about. Her figure was very blurry as she repeatedly teleported about with high speed.

"Little Qing. Little Qing!" Ning stood there at the entrance to his Immortal estate. Just by standing there, he gave off the aura of an Immortal sword, causing others to feel an uncontrollable desire to

submit to him. “How are you now ‘invincible’? Can’t you see it’s raining? Stop running around like that!” Ning laughed.

“Little Qing.” The Whitewater Hound spoke in the human tongue as well. “What is going on? Why are you so excited?!”

“Ahahaha...” Continuing to laugh, Little Qing suddenly appeared in front of Ning with a swish. “Master. Master!” Little Qing’s eyes were filled with excitement. “I’m now able to use Greater Teleportation! I’m finally able to use Greater Teleportation!”

“What?! Greater Teleportation?” Ning revealed a look of surprise. When he had killed Youngflame Nong, he had once acquired a Dao-seal of Greater Teleportation. In the underwater estate, he had also acquired one as a protective item. Normal ‘Void Blink’ techniques or ‘spatial teleportation’ techniques...they were all classified as ‘Lesser Teleportation’. They only allowed one to teleport around within a single region; at most, they would allow one to move a certain distance.

As one gained more and more insights into space, one would be able to teleport greater and greater distances, and even spacelock techniques would begin to become ineffective.

But upon completely mastering the complete Grand Dao of Qiankun, one would be able to use Greater Teleportation. Greater Teleportation...it could allow you to teleport from one world to another world.

For example, one might be located in the Netherworld Kingdom, but with a single Greater Teleportation, one could move straight back to Serpentwing Lake of the Grand Xia world!

This was why Youngflame Nong had been so confident despite having been trapped within the Witchriver Immortal Estate. He knew that no matter how dangerous things became, all he had to do was use the Greater Teleportation Dao-seal and he would be able to immediately flee back to his clan’s headquarters in the Grand Xia world. But unfortunately, he had viewed Ning with complete contempt, and had believed Ning to pose no threat to him at all. By the time Ning released that black loop... there was no longer a chance for Youngflame Nong to escape!

“I’ve reached the Grand Dao Domain level of the Grand Dao of Qiankun!” Little Qing said excitedly, “I’m already capable of Greater Teleportation. Ahahaha...I’m now invincible. Who can kill me? Who can kill me?! Ahahaha, I can now escape from any formation, no matter how formidable.”

Ning and the Whitewater Hound both laughed.

Azure Skysnakes possessed astounding talent and affinity for space. Upon reaching the Grand Dao Domain level, they could become as one with the Grand Dao, and thus they would be able to utilize Greater Teleportation. There was no point in even feeling jealous about it.

“Master, teach me some more about the sword. I now have a greater understanding of the Grand Dao of Qiankun, and my ability to improve my sword-arts will improve as well,” Little Qing immediately said. She wanted for Ning to be able to teach her, and so she had chosen to learn the sword as well, fusing her Grand Dao of Qiankun into her sword-arts.

“Alright.” Ning nodded.

Little Qing was improving, but his own rate of improvement was even more astonishing. After all...from the time when Ning established his Zifu region in the Grand Xia world to the day he entered Mount Innerheart, only roughly twenty years had passed!

Now he was training at Mount Innerheart, and he even had the chance to listen to his master, Patriarch Subhuti, lecture on the Dao. He also often went to meditate in the Stellar Hall, and also fought constantly against the golems, so as to further sharpen and refine his sword-arts. He also had countless exquisite sword-arts to analyze! How could his rate of improvement be slow?

.....

With each defeat of a golem, Ning was allowed to choose a new technique. But with each fight, the golems would change as well. For example, during the first battle, the fourth golem had used overbearing, powerful sword-arts; during the second, third, and fourth battle, however, the golem had used different techniques. At the start, the golem only

changed between different sword-arts styles, but afterwards it even began to use sabres, longspears, staves, and even flying swords, magic treasures, or formations to assist it. This made the fourth golem increasingly difficult to defeat.

However, Ning's own power was improving at an astonishing rate as well!

He had now analyzed more than a hundred sword-arts from the fourth level of the Divinities Palace, all of which were comparable to the complete [Three-Foot Sword].

Next, Ning had defeated the fifth golem more than thirty times and analyzed more than thirty sword-arts manuals from the fifth floor!

After that, Ning defeated the sixth golem more than twenty times and acquired more than twenty sword-arts manuals from the sixth floor.

And then, Ning had defeated the seventh golem eighteen times, acquiring eighteen sword-arts manuals from the seventh floor!

Although he had read and analyzed multiple sword-arts manuals, many of which had been written by Empyrean Gods or True Immortals and some of which had been written by Daofathers...Ning continued to spend most of his efforts on the [Three-Foot Sword], keeping it at the heart of his sword-arts. He infused the strengths and excellences of the other sword techniques in the [Three-Foot Sword], causing it to be continuously improved and perfected. There were now more and more differences between the current [Three-Foot Sword] and the one which Immortal Northwalker had originally created. In fact, it had now transformed into an even more formidable sword-art that belonged to Ning and Ning alone.

.....

And so, completely focusing on his training, Ning spent more than thirty years here within Mount Innerheart.

# Chapter 8: The Ninth Stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]

Within a grassy area in the Tristar Crescent Abode. This was the location of Ji Ning's Immortal estate.

Within a courtyard inside the Immortal estate.

Ning was seated in the lotus position on the ground, eyes shut, completely unmoving. Next to him lay a large, snowy-white hound.

Whoosh.

An azure-robed maiden appeared out of nowhere. It was Little Qing.

"Don't make a sound." The Whitewater Hound opened his eyes, hurriedly sending her a mental message.

"What is it, Uncle White?" Little Qing looked puzzledly at Ning, seated in the lotus position with shut eyes. She sent mentally back, "Master is training? But doesn't he usually go into his private room when meditating? Why is he sitting here on the ground?"

When training, Ning actually spent most of his time within the Still Room in the underwater estate. This was a training room built by Daoist Threelives which truly did allow one to gain insights into the Dao at an astonishing rate. But of course, the very existence of the underwater estate was a huge secret; Patriarch Subhuti had also reminded Ning that he absolutely could not reveal its existence. Thus, not even Little Qing or Uncle White knew about it.

"He was taking a stroll in the courtyard but suddenly had a flash of insight, and so he immediately sat down in the lotus position to meditate on it," the Whitewater Hound sent back. "This flash of insight came suddenly; he didn't have any time to waste on running back to his private room."

"Oh." Little Qing nodded. This was how sudden flashes of insights often worked; when they came, they had to be seized right away.

“During the past thirty years, Master’s sword-arts have improved at an astonishing rate. He’s even defeated the eighth golem nine times. He’s now gained a sudden flash of insight...his power is definitely going to improve dramatically!” Little Qing said excitedly, “He might even be able to beat the ninth golem!”

The ninth golem...even many Void-level Diremonsters and Fiendgods were helpless before it! From this, one could tell how utterly astonishing Ning’s rate of improvement had been during the past thirty years.

“My child Ning’s talent is extremely high, and his affinity for the Dao of the Sword is particularly exceptional,” the Whitewater Hound said. “When in the Grand Xia world, he had to divide up his attention amongst multiple types of techniques as well as engage in all sorts of battles! Here at Mount Innerheart, however, there is no infighting at all. In addition, Ning has completely focused his attention on his sword-arts for more than thirty years. His sword-arts have already exceeded an utterly inconceivable level.”

“Right. Truly inconceivable.” Little Qing nodded as well. During the past thirty years, Little Qing had improved dramatically as well, having mastered Greater Teleportation. The Whitewater Hound was more intelligent than Little Qing, with superb comprehension ability; thus, he had become a true grandmaster of formations.

But Ning’s improvement outstripped both of theirs!

Originally, the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart murmured amongst themselves about the strength of this new disciple, not feeling much respect for Ning. Afterwards, however, Ning began to focus all his heart and efforts on sword-arts, and his abilities began to dramatically rise without pause. He defeated the fifth, sixth, seventh, and even the eighth golem...causing all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart to be completely tongue-tied in shock.

Even the controller of the Divinities Palace, the old demon Silvermoon, had said with an emotional sigh, “Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning truly is a peerless future Sword Immortal. His improvement in his sword-arts

has been utterly terrifying."

Although Patriarch Subhuti helped by expounding on the Dao, as the saying went, the master might open the door, but cultivation depends on the self. The Patriarch could give some advice at critical moments, but most of Ning's cultivation and insights came from himself. Clearly, he was extremely well-suited to the Dao of the Sword! Even the similarly peerless Sword Immortal, Lu Dongbin, had felt the desire to recruit him, and had made repeated requests to take him as his disciple.

Unfortunately, the Grand Xia Emperor had steadfastly refused! However, thanks to this 'setback', Ning had ended up arriving at Mount Innerheart and becoming apprenticed to Patriarch Subhuti.

"Quick, look!"

On the twelfth day of Ning sitting in the lotus position in meditation, sword-ki suddenly began to fill the pavilion area around Ning.

Swish! Swish!

Little Qing and Uncle White both hurriedly stepped back, moving to a distant pathway to watch from afar. They saw that more and more streaks of sword-ki began to appear in the area around Ning. Suddenly, Ning opened his eyes as well.

"Is this...the realm which senior Northwalker had reached in the past?" Ning murmured gently to himself as the countless streaks of sword-ki around him began to gather together, becoming extremely solid and dense and forming into a single, dazzling Immortal sword that glowed with white light.

"Chop," Ning said.

SLASH!

The sword-ki that had formed into a sharp Immortal sword of light sliced through the air, and as it did so, the illusion of an enormous black dragon actually appeared above it! This illusory black dragon coiled around the flying sword of light, and in the eyes of the black dragon a look of wanton arrogance could be seen. The flying sword of white light

sliced through the air, and the surrounding space completely exploded.

"The ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]..." Ning murmured to himself, "Sword Roaming the Three Realms!"

"The most powerful sword technique left behind by senior Northwalker...I've finally mastered it. However, I feel as though this sword technique of senior Northwalker's, this 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms', is too flamboyant and brash. It isn't stately enough. If this technique could be altered to be slightly more reserved and not so brash, its power might rise even more."

Ning's own level of judgment was now extremely high.

It must be understood that the sword-arts manuals on the fourth floor of the Divinities Palace were already on the level of the complete [Three-Foot Sword].

The fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth floors...although Ning hadn't chosen certain techniques that overlapped with techniques he had already chosen, he had still analyzed a total of more than a hundred sword-arts manuals! Ning had even chosen nine books from the eighth floor of the Divinities Palace, each of which had been written by major powers of the Three Realms. Although they were written rather casually, they were still unfathomably profound.

Given that Ning already had so many sword-arts for his perusing, how could he not have superb judgment by now?

Immortal Northwalker had roamed the world by himself and painstakingly taught himself. Ning, however, had become an apprentice to Patriarch Subhuti, and had the chance to analyze countless sword-arts that had been collected from throughout the Three Realms. Given that he was incomparably suited to be a Sword Immortal, how could he not be extremely astute in judging these types of techniques?

"I have now completely mastered all nine stances of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning nodded to himself. "However, I've modified the first eight stances to make them more suited to me. As for this ninth stance...I will need to modify it as well."

With so many peerless sword-arts manuals available to him, Ning's foundation in the Dao of the Sword was indeed at an inconceivably sturdy level.

.....

"Master, Master." Little Qing flew over. "That sword technique just now...it seemed to be unfathomably profound. Did you make a breakthrough?"

"Yes. I've already mastered the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Ning nodded.

The nine complete stances of the [Three-Foot Sword] were: Lustrous Sword-Heart, Manifold Thistlethorns, Sudden Sword-Light, Sun in the Sky, Moonlight Hiding the Sword, Grand Dao Domain, Horizontal Sword Execution, Immortal-Devil, and Sword Roaming the Three Realms!

The nearby Uncle White also said with amazement and excitement, "Ning, child, I heard that by using this [Three-Foot Sword], Immortal Northwalker was comparable to a Celestial Immortal in power. There are even Celestial Immortals whose sword-arts are not as profound as this [Three-Foot Sword]. Your sword-arts are already now comparable to that of some Celestial Immortals?"

"Immortal Northwalker was comparable to a Celestial Immortal...but that was a bit of a misleading saying." Ning had often chatted with his fellow disciples here at Mount Innerheart, and he now naturally knew much more than he had in the past. "It is extremely hard for a person to overcome the Celestial Tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal. Some Void-level Earth Immortals have fairly simple tribulations, while others might have tribulations that are hundreds or even thousands of times harder. In fact, I've even heard that for some Void-level Earth Immortals, the Celestial Tribulation didn't even descend at all; it just dissipated. In addition, Celestial Immortals have trained for varying amounts of time, and some are unaffiliated individuals who train on their own while others are apprenticed to major powers. Naturally, they will all be at different levels of power."

"Thus, Immortal Northwalker being 'comparable to a Celestial Immortal' was only in reference to the most ordinary type of Celestial Immortals.

"For example, Loose Immortal Juhua had lived for many millions of years and was also referred to as being 'comparable to Celestial Immortals', just like senior Northwalker who had lived for a million years," Ning said with a laugh. "There are great differences in power between Celestial Immortals. Things are quite tricky. It's possible that monstrously powerful Loose Immortals who have lived for millions of years or ten million years might be able to kill weak Celestial Immortals, but the most powerful Celestial Immortals...I hear that some of them have already completely mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword or other Grand Daos, and are extremely close to becoming Pure Yang True Immortals. These are the geniuses of Celestial Immortals, and some are even able to compete against Pure Yang True Immortals."

"Thus, even amongst Celestial Immortals, there are still many varying levels of power. This thing about being 'comparable to Celestial Immortals'...haha, that's just a form of praise and flattery," Ning said.

Indeed.

At present, Ning has already reached the fifteenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, which was comparable to an early-stage Void-level Fiendgod Body Refiner! Upon using his [Starseizing Hand], and his terrifyingly powerful sword-arts...he was definitely no weaker than the former Immortal Northwalker by now!

When Ning had first entered the Black-White College, he had felt incomparable veneration for Immortal Northwalker. Naturally, at the time, he had felt nothing amiss about the saying that he was comparable to a Celestial Immortal.

But now that Ning himself had already reached Immortal Northwalker's level, he felt a bit embarrassed upon hearing himself being praised as 'comparable to Celestial Immortals'. After all, Ning knew very well that

he was currently merely on par with ordinary Celestial Immortals. If he were to run into slightly more powerful Celestial Immortals, they would probably be able to defeat and even kill him!

But Little Qing still said excitedly, “Master, stop being so modest. No matter what, your sword-arts are definitely at the level of a Celestial Immortal by now! In fact, you are even superior to ordinary Celestial Immortals, right?”

Ning was startled for a moment, then let out a resigned laugh and said, “True. But Little Qing, I’m still just a minor figure in the Three Realms; it’s best for me to be a bit more low-key at my current level of power.”

“Master, it can be said that at your current level of power, you are utterly invincible against anyone below the Celestial Immortal level.” Little Qing didn’t show the slightest hint of modesty at all.

Ning smiled. Invincible against anyone below the Celestial Immortal?

Most likely even monstrously powerful Loose Immortals who had lived for millions of years wouldn’t be that much more powerful than the current Ning. It could indeed be said that he was at the very peak of power for those below the Celestial Immortal level. However...in the Three Realms, Loose Immortals were still just minor figures; only Celestial Immortals had some status. As Ning was the Old Patriarch’s disciple, he had higher standards for himself.

“I haven’t even accessed the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace or the Three Realms Palace,” Ning mused to himself. “After I go to the ninth floor and to the Three Realms Palace...especially the Three Realms Palace...mm. My fellow disciples have all said that so long as I can acquire a single technique from the Three Realms Palace, I can rely on it to roam the entire Three Realms. By then, I’ll probably be much more powerful than I currently am; I’ll no longer be on Immortal Northwalker’s level, and will probably be on Immortal Juhua’s level. Even against fairly formidable Celestial Immortals, I should still be able to keep myself alive.”

Ning was quite eager to see the Three Realms Palace.

"Little Qing, Uncle White," Ning instructed, "I am going to go into secluded meditation to further perfect my [Three-Foot Sword]. For now, continue to handle your own affairs; there's no need to pay me any attention."

"Alright." The Whitewater Hound nodded.

"Master, you are going into seclusion right after making a breakthrough? The gap in power between you and me is growing greater and greater," Little Qing said helplessly. But then she chortled, "Fortunately, I have Greater Teleportation. It will probably be a long, long time before you can do this, right Master?"

Ning shook his head. A 'long time'? He was a human; he had to completely master the Grand Dao of Qiankun before he could use Greater Teleportation. He was still extremely far away from mastering his Grand Dao of the Sword, much less the Grand Dao of Qiankun!

Rumble...

The stone door slid shut as Ning entered his private room. A rippling 'wall' could be seen in this private room, and as Ning stepped into the ripples, he arrived within the underwater estate.

"Ji Ning, you have finally mastered the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]." Within the underwater estate, the giant yellow bear was waiting with a smile on his face.

"Senior, will I now be capable of challenging the eighth level of the Wargod Hall?" Ning asked. More than ten years ago, he had already passed the seventh level of the Wargod Hall and chosen an Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

# Chapter 9: Two Immortal-Ranked Magic Treasures

The giant yellow bear nodded lightly. “Your chances are quite good. You can give it a try.”

Ning smiled, then walked towards the corridor.

At every distinct level of power, Fiendgody Body Refiners would have just two chances to attempt to pass the Wargod Hall’s trials. Thus, Ning would generally ask the giant yellow bear for his opinion. Each trial represented a supreme treasure, and so Ning didn’t dare to be too reckless in taking them. This was especially true now, as they represented Immortal-ranked magic treasures!

A short while later.

Whoosh. Ning walked out from the Wargod Hall.

“Success!” Ning let out a soft breath. On the eighth floor of the Wargod Hall, he had encountered an ancient, Void-level Fiendgod! Ning’s own [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was only at the fifteenth stage, and he was only comparable to an ordinary early-stage Void-level Fiendgod Body Refiner. If he was to be compared against real Fiendgods, he would probably only be equivalent to a peak Primal-level Fiendgod!

A Void-level Fiendgod was a full level higher than him in power! It also had its own divine abilities that allowed its might to increase even further!

This truly had been a bloody, hard-fought battle. In fact, the Void-level Fiendgod had even unleashed three powerful clones as he transformed his single body into three mighty Fiendgods which surrounded and assaulted Ning! Ning had used the [Three Heads, Six Arms] ability, the [Starseizing Hand], and had sent his sword-light flashing everywhere...and in the end, he managed to seize the upper hand, then force the Fiendgod to admit defeat.

“That was absolutely fantastic. After studying the Dao for thirty years

here at Mount Innerheart, I finally defeated a Void-level Fiendgod!” Ning thought back to the past, when he had roamed the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. Back then, he had been nothing but an ant in the eyes of that ancient, Void-level Fiendgod.

But now! He himself was on the same level of a Void-level Fiendgod! He was no weaker, and in fact, he had just defeated one!

“Strange. Why would a Void-level Fiendgod have appeared within the underwater estate?” Ning’s heart was filled with questions. He had asked the spirit of the underwater estate, that giant yellow bear, about some of these questions, but the spirit refused to say.

“Ji Ning, congratulations. You’ve defeated the eighth level of the Wargod Hall.” The giant yellow bear appeared out of nowhere. “In the past, even Immortal Juhua himself was only able to overcome the seventh level.”

Immortal Juhua, after becoming a Loose Immortal, had finally challenged and overcome the seventh level. A long, long time later, he became powerful enough to challenge and overcome the eighth level, but by then he no longer had any chances left to make the attempt!

“Senior, I’m going to choose a treasure now,” Ning said with a laugh. “Last time, when I overcame the seventh level, the book of treasures you brought out only included high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures; there wasn’t a single top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure to be found.”

“This time, there definitely will be,” the giant yellow bear said. “And during your third selection, the number of treasures will be even greater.”

Ning felt resigned. This was in accordance with the rules of the Treasure Hall. In principle, one had three chances to acquire Immortal-ranked magic treasures! They would come when one challenged and overcame the seventh and eighth levels of the Wargod Hall, and when one reached the sixteenth level of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] and entered a brand new and distinct level of power!

But the number of Immortal-ranked magic treasures available for the

choosing during the first chance was quite limited.

The second choosing saw more choices.

As for the third...all of the Immortal-ranked magic treasures which Daoist Threelives had left behind would be put on display. Naturally, many exquisite specimens would be made available then.

"You know, it is a minor matter for you, as the controller of the Treasure Hall, to pull out those other treasures and let me choose from them, right?" Ning felt resigned.

"Can't do it." The giant yellow bear shook his head. "Not even I can change the rules which Master left behind. In the past, it was because you had just entered the Wanxiang Adept level, the level at which a cultivator is most likely to perish, that Master's rules allowed for an exception to be made and for you to choose some protective treasures. As for now? You are sufficiently strong enough already; we must follow the rules now."

Ning nodded.

.....

Ning entered the Treasure Hall.

An amount of time equal to boiling a kettle of tea passed.

He left the Treasure Hall, another Immortal-ranked magic treasure in his hands!

"Hahaha..." Ning laughed as he walked out of the Treasure Hall. He was indeed much happier with what he chose during this second choosing than he had been for the first.

"Senior, I'm going to go to the Still Room for a period of closed-door meditation," Ning said, then headed to the underwater estate's Still Room.

Rumble! The door to the Still Room swung open, then once more swung shut.

Ning sat down in the lotus position atop that enormous bed of netherwater jade. The inky-jade bed emanated an astonishing aura of

coldness, causing even the soul to feel chilled! The very first time he had sat atop this bed of netherwater jade, Ning had felt as though his soul had been completely frozen. However, Ning was now far more powerful.

His insights into the Dao were at a high level. His Dao-heart was firmer. His soul was more powerful! Even the bed of netherwater jade was only able to make Ning feel extremely cool and relaxed.

Rumble...

The Grand Bodhi Stillheart Formation began to emanate ripples of power.

Ning's heart turned completely calm. With a wave of his hand, Ning caused two treasures to appear and levitate before him. One treasure was a golden circlet! As for the other, it was a set of nine black Immortal swords that seemed to flutter in and out of existence in a transient manner.

The golden circlet was the item Ning had chosen when he had overcome the seventh level of the Wargod Hall. It was known as the Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet. It was a high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure that was meant to trap or restrain foes. Once a foe was caught by it, it would become very hard for the foe to escape, and in fact some weaker foes would be restrained and absorbed into the circlet itself. There was a stand-alone dimension within the circlet, and it could be used to collect living creatures or inanimate objects. Upon being trapped within it, even the likes of a Pure Yang True Immortal would be unable to depart from it.

But of course, Pure Yang True Immortals wouldn't be so stupid as to just stand there and allow it to draw them in!

As for the nine black Immortal swords, they were the set of Immortal-ranked magic treasures which Ning had just chosen after having overcome the eighth level of the Wargod Hall. They were known as the Heavenraker Swords. All nine of them were top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords. These nine swords...although they were individually still inferior to the Thousandbull Sword, which had reached the very peak of

top-grade Immortal-ranked magic items and was almost comparable to a Pure Yang Immortal sword in power, there were nine of these Heaventrake Swords! Taken as a whole, they were not weaker than the Thousandbull Sword at all!

Most importantly of all, Ning had once seen a sword-arts secret manual on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace which was known as [Heaventrake].

Ning had previously asked the giant yellow bear, "Senior, on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace, I saw a sword-arts manual titled [Heaventrake]. The abridged version stated that this technique was a sword-art created by a major power of the Three Realms known as Daofather Heavenrake. Might I ask if there is a connection between the Heaventrake Swords and Daofather Heavenrake?"

"Hahaha, this set of Heaventrake Swords were specially designed to be used to execute the Heaventrake sword technique! The Heaventrake sword technique was already tremendously famous back in the Primordial World of Pangu, and is still an extremely famous sword-art in the current Three Realms!" The giant yellow bear had said with a laugh.

And so, Ning had immediately chosen this set of swords!

.....

Ning sat there atop the netherwater jade bed, staring at the two mighty Immortal-ranked magic treasures before him. He nodded gently. "After I defeat the ninth golem, I'll immediately go to the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace and choose the [Heaventrake] sword technique."

"In the future, I will need to slowly perfect the [Three-Foot Sword] by absorbing many of the best points from other techniques. As for [Heaventrake]...if things are as I suspect, it will become yet another technique that I can use to defeat my foes.

The sword-arts which Immortal Northwalker had created was...more than a bit lacking compared to some of the powerful sword-arts contained within the Divinities Palace.

Ning had already completely overhauled and perfected the first eight stances! As for the ninth stance, he had improved and perfected it. He himself would have to go create a tenth stance and an eleventh stance for this technique.

The sword-arts which Ning himself created would be the sword-arts that were best suited to him, and which would be the most powerful in his hands!

However, before he actually created his own sword-arts, the [Heavenraker] technique could be used for a period of time.

"This Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet...after Uncle White becomes a Void-level Earth Immortal, I'll give it to him," Ning murmured to himself. This circlet wasn't of great use to him, and when he had chosen it, it was with the intention of giving it to Uncle White. Uncle White was a grandmaster of formations, but he was lacking in attacking techniques. This Tripartite Immortal-Locking Circlet could transform into the tripartite powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man. It was incredibly difficult to use, but it was very well-suited for Uncle White, who was a grandmaster of formations. It didn't even require Uncle White to go fight in close combat. It was indeed quite well suited for him!

.....

This closed-door session lasted for more than a month. Ning completely and thoroughly overhauled this ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms', making it more reserved and stately while also making it even more ferocious and fast!

For Immortal Northwalker, the ninth stance of 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms' represented the pinnacle, but for Ji Ning, the ninth stance was just a midway point; he was definitely going to go create a tenth and an eleventh stance.

"It's already summer?" When Ning walked out of his Immortal estate he saw the sun hanging high in the sky, blazing with incomparable heat.

Every single world was illuminated by the Solar Star and the Lunar Star.

This was even true for the estate-world of the Tristar Crescent Abode. Every single world would see the projections of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star. For example, within the world of the Grand Xia, there was also a Solar Star and a Lunar Star! Because the Solar Star was a bit closer to the world of the Grand Xia, in that world, the Solar Star was a bit larger while the Lunar Star appeared a bit smaller.

Although they were only ‘projections’ of the Solar Star and the Lunar Star, they still possessed utterly terrifying power. Clearly, the power of these two stars, the most supreme and exalted of celestial bodies, was utterly inconceivable.

“Uncle-master.”

“Patriarch.”

“Patriarch.”

Many disciples of Mount Innerheart were currently congregated outside the Divinities Palace. Some were quietly training in the Dao, others were discussing it, and still others were relaxing. Upon seeing Ning arrive, they all hurriedly rose to their feet and called out with respect.

During the course of these thirty years, these disciples of Mount Innerheart now felt true esteem for Ji Ning, an admiration which came from the depths of their heart!

“Mm.” Ning just nodded lightly, then stepped into the Divinities Palace. He started from the first floor and walked all the way to the ninth.

On the staircase to the side of the ninth floor, the white-robed Silvermoon was seated, leaning against the banister. There was some Immortal wine, roasted goose, and other roasted meat next to him. His feather-fan was covering his stomach as he just lay there napping.

Ning was in no hurry. He first walked to a nearby bookshelf, then picked out the sword-arts manual titled [Heavenraker].

The secret manuals located here on the ninth floor were all extraordinary.

Ning flipped through the abridged version, then nodded gently, revealing a hint of a smile. [Heavenraker] was indeed created by Daofather Heavenrake of the Three Realms. It required nine Immortal-ranked flying swords to be used, and ideally the nine swords would all be infused with the 36-Layered Heavenrake Sword Formation.

"This [Heavenraker]...it uses the profound mysteries of the elements of Water and Earth, has also been infused with the secrets of the Grand Dao of Qiankun, and is unleashed through the Grand Dao of the Sword." Ning nodded to himself. He was quite skilled in Water, Qiankun, and the Sword. As for Earth...Daofather Heavenrake had clearly prepared some more elementary sword techniques amongst the many sword techniques.

Although Ning had few to no insights regarding the element of Earth, he could still use those sword-arts that didn't include the Earth-element. In the future, he would probably advance in Earth as well as a result.

"Senior apprentice-brother, senior apprentice-brother." Ning put down the abridged version, then walked next to Silvermoon and called out to him. In fact, he even gave him a little push. "Senior apprentice-brother!"

"Huh?" Only now did Silvermoon open his eyes. "What, what is it?"

"Senior apprentice-brother, I want to challenge the ninth golem," Ning said.

# Chapter 10: The Senior Disciples

“The ninth golem?” Silvermoon immediately rose to his feet. Feather-fan in hand, he began to laugh in surprise. “Junior apprentice-brother, do you feel confident?”

“Haven’t fought it before, so hard to say,” Ji Ning said.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you are always so modest. Come, come, come. Let’s hurry. Show me what you have.” Silvermoon immediately led Ning down from the Divinities Palace and to the empty testing grounds.

.....

Many of the disciples of Mount Innerheart were gathered in the empty area. Even Little Qing and Uncle White had hurried over here. Because Ning had sent his two spirit-beasts a mental message earlier, telling them that he was going to challenge the ninth golem, Little Qing and Uncle White had paused their training and hurriedly ran over to watch the fight.

“Can it be that Patriarch Ji Ning is going to challenge the ninth golem? He’s already defeated the eighth golem nine times by now, right?”

“He might really be challenging the ninth golem!”

“There are so many of us here, including some monsters that have lived here for tens of thousands of years, but none of us have ever defeated the ninth golem.”

The other disciples were all stealthily chatting amongst themselves. In fact, some of them even spoke out towards Little Qing or Uncle White.

“Azure Skysnake, Whitewater Hound, which golem is Patriarch Ji Ning challenging?”

“Little sister Qing, don’t tell them, just tell me alone.”

Over the course of the past thirty years, Little Qing and Uncle White had become quite familiar with these disciples.

Uncle White smiled. Little Qing just raised her head proudly. “Just keep

watching and you will find out.”

The distant Ning and Silvermoon were currently chatting with each other. These two both had very high statuses, and generally speaking the normal disciples of Mount Innerheart wouldn’t dare to speak to them too often.

Whoosh. Silvermoon waved his hand, and a golem appeared out of nowhere.

This golem’s entire body was a white jade color. Around his right arm were nine circular loops, and the invisible aura of power emanating from him was quite strong.

“The ninth golem!”

“The ninth!”

“Uncle-master Ji Ning is actually challenging the ninth golem!”

Instantly, a series of startled cries rang out as everyone felt excited.

Life here at Mount Innerheart was too relaxed and peaceful. Normally, everyone just focused on quietly training in the Dao. Thus, when someone went to challenge the ninth golem, many of the other disciples would cluster around to watch. And this particular challenge...was issued by Ji Ning, who had just become a member of Patriarch Subhuti’s school around thirty years ago, and who had been selected as the Old Patriarch’s future personal disciple. This naturally caused great excitement.

.....

Within the testing grounds. Ning and the ninth golem stared at each other from afar.

“This is your first time challenging me, but your Fiendgod body is only at the peak Primal level,” the ninth golem said, his eyes flashing with hidden sharpness as he carefully inspected Ning.

Ning knew that this ninth golem had been personally forged by his master, Patriarch Subhuti, and that it was comparable to a Pure Yang treasure in power. It had its own soul and possessed intelligence.

A pair of Darknorth swords appeared in Ning's two hands. "Enough chit-chat. Show me your most powerful sword attacks."

"Hmph." The ninth golem let out a cold snort as a wide, heavy sword appeared in his hands. "Then I'll play with you for a bit." As soon as his words came out, the ninth golem took a single step forward, causing the ground to tremble as he suddenly appeared in front of Ning. He had moved so fast that Ning couldn't help but raise his eyebrows. Ning's feet moved just slightly as he simultaneously sent the twin swords in his hands blocking upwards.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh....

A massive illusory wave that seemed to fill the heavens suddenly appeared. Ning's sword-arts had reached a high enough level that it could call upon the aid of a large amount of natural energy, thus generating this sort of manifestation.

The illusory wave swept forward, Ning's sword-light within it.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The ninth golem's heavy sword carried incomparable savagery and dominance, and with each stroke the heavy sword smashed against the wave!

Ning's sword technique was more tenacious and powerful, and it came out in a steady, unbroken stream. By contrast, the ninth golem's sword technique was more savage and ferocious. However, in the face of Ning's unbroken, flowing string of attacks, the ninth golem was finding it increasingly hard to hang on.

"So you have a bit of talent after all. If I don't bring out some of my true power, I won't be able to beat you." The ninth golem produced a second heavy sword in his other hand as well.

Boom. Boom. The two heavy swords began to whirl out, seeming to have transformed into an enormous windmill and creating the massive illusion of a whirlpool above it! The enormous whirlpool illusion clearly represented an enormous amount of natural power had been summoned...

and the ninth golem's sword technique clearly became even more savage and dominating! It carried a crushing, grinding power that was able to completely suppress Ning!

"Sword Roaming the Three Realms!" Upon being suppressed, Ning instantly changed his sword technique. He immediately executed 'Sword Roaming the Three Realms', which he had perfected while in closed-door training. Two streaks of dazzling sword-light flew out like a pair of black dragons that were swimming through the air. These two roaming black dragons twined around each other as they pounced towards the enemy.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Their respective sword-lights clashed out three times.

Suddenly, everything came to a halt.

The ninth golem and Ning had moved past each other while exchanging blows. Their backs were to each other, and the ninth golem was completely unmoving. As for Ning, he put away the Darknorth swords in his hands.

On the golem's chest, there was a wicked, savage-looking wound!

During their three clashes, Ning's sword had clearly been a slight bit faster. Although it was only faster by a small amount...it had been the deciding factor in this battle.

The ninth golem lowered his head to look at the wound. The wound on his chest disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"You win." The ninth golem turned, giving Ning a glance. "You beat me in our very first fight; you can now enter the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace."

"Jadesuffer, this is my junior apprentice-brother; it is only natural that he beat you." Silvermoon walked over.

"Junior apprentice-brother? The Old Patriarch took on a new disciple?" The ninth golem looked towards Ning in surprise.

"The more disciples who defeat you, the closer you are to freedom. You

should be happy. Alright, time for you to go back to your place.” Silvermoon waved his hand, instantly collecting the ninth golem again.

“Junior apprentice-brother, congratulations.” Silvermoon smiled towards Ning. “Come, let’s go into the Divinities Palace.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. He immediately followed Silvermoon into the Divinities Palace.

The disciples of Mount Innerheart watched this all happen in a daze. They stared as Ning and Silvermoon entered the Divinities Palace.

“He won!”

“He actually won!”

“Patriarch Ji Ning defeated the ninth golem.”

“What a dominating sword-art...what a terrifying sword-art!”

“Uncle-master truly is a peerless Sword Immortal.”

All of them sighed in endless amazement.

“It has only been thirty years, right?”

“It has only been about thirty years since the Patriarch became the Old Patriarch’s disciple, right? Thirty years ago, the Patriarch was just barely able to defeat the fourth golem, but after thirty short years, he has actually defeated the ninth golem. I’ve been here on this mountain for nearly a million years!” A six-armed Fiendgod whose body was wreathed in dim flames muttered to himself, then shook his head and sighed. “You humans truly do have a ridiculous level of comprehension.”

“I’m a human and I’ve been on the mountain for a thousand years, but I haven’t beaten the ninth golem.”

“Not even Celestial Immortals are necessarily capable of defeating the ninth golem. Thirty years...no wonder the Old Patriarch chose him as a disciple.”

“The personal disciples of the Old Patriarch truly are all formidable.”

“Little sister Qing, can you ask the Patriarch to lecture to us on the Dao

sometime?”

“Brother White, your master’s sword techniques are truly formidable. I have many questions with regards to the sword; can we have your master provide us with a few pointers sometime?”

Everyone was discussing what had just happened. Little Qing and Uncle White both felt their hearts filled with delight.

.....

After just thirty years, Ning had defeated the ninth golem. This caused all the ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart to sigh in amazement at how inconceivable this was. However, for the personal disciples such as the old demon Silvermoon, this was as expected.

Ning and Silvermoon were walking up the stairs in the Divinities Palace, striding upon the wooden steps as they moved upwards.

“Junior apprentice-brother, for you to be able to defeat the ninth golem after thirty years is quite impressive,” Silvermoon laughed. “All of those ordinary disciples below us are completely shocked right now.”

“Eh.” Ning didn’t feel as though there was anything to be proud of. He had the guidance of his master, Patriarch Subhuti, as well help from the Stellar Hall of the underwater estate. He would often sit atop the bed of netherwater jade within the Still Room in the underwater estate, and constantly attune to the Dao within the Grand Bodhi Stillheart Formation. Thirty years? His original goal had always been to defeat the ninth golem within a few decades.

“Might I ask, how did my senior fellow disciples do? How many years did they spend in order to defeat the ninth golem?” Ning asked curiously.

“Amongst Master’s many personal disciples, your performance can be described as normal,” Silvermoon said with a laugh. “Ruling out the ones who were already extremely strong when they first followed Master... there have been a total of twelve who were very weak when they first followed Master. The fastest one took one year, while the slowest one took more than 13000 years.”

Ning was amazed. “The fastest one took one year? The slowest one took more than ten thousand?” A personal disciple of the Old Patriarch who had taken more than ten thousand the years...this was too ridiculous. And just a single year for the other? This was also too crazy!

“Master has a total of nineteen disciples. There were seven who were already extremely strong when they accepted him as their master, while there were twelve who accepted him as master when they were weak,” Silvermoon said. “Amongst them...ninth junior apprentice-brother had an exceedingly high level of comprehension. Back then, Master’s avatar was roaming the ancient Primordial World. He ran into ninth junior apprentice-brother, who at that time was nothing more than an ordinary child who loved to paint. Master just provided him with a single line of guidance...and ninth junior apprentice-brother transformed overnight from an ordinary child who had never before engaged in cultivation to the level of having completely mastered an entire Dao-Path, the Dao of Inkwater. He then followed Master to Mount Innerheart. After a year, he defeated the ninth golem.”

Ning blinked. To transform overnight from an ordinary child who loved painting...to someone who had completely mastered a complete Dao-Path?

To defeat the ninth golem after a single year?

“Next are third senior apprentice-brother and sixth junior apprentice-brother,” Silvermoon said. “Both of them only spent a few years to defeat the ninth golem, and when they first joined the school neither had engaged in any cultivation training. However...they have extraordinary heritages. Third senior apprentice-brother was blessed with tremendous luck when he was born, as he is a Golden Crow who was born on the Solar Star. As for sixth junior apprentice-brother, he is also incredible; he is a spirit-monkey who was born from one of the stones which Lady Nuwa used to repair the Heavens.” 1

Ning was startled. A spirit-monkey born from a stone that was used to repair the Heavens? This caused Ning to think back to a story recorded in a novel back from his own lesser world of Earth. 2 He wondered if this so-

called spirit-monkey was similar to the one mentioned in the story he had read.

"After those two are the ones who trained for dozens of years," Silvermoon said. "In short...humans have extremely high levels of comprehension, while third senior apprentice-brother and sixth junior apprentice-brother were born as extraordinary living creatures who also had extremely high levels of comprehension."

"All of the disciples under Master's tutelage who defeated the ninth golem in under a century were humans and those with extraordinary lineages."

"There are several who are monsters like me who are under Master's tutelage. For example, I had to train for more than three thousand years before I defeated the ninth golem. There are some who were even slower than me. On the whole, monsters have a much lower level of comprehension than humans do."

Ning nodded.

Monsters had poor levels of comprehension, and Fiendgods had it even worse! However, the heavens had made it up to them in other ways. Humans at the Zifu level had a lifespan of five centuries, while those at the Wanxiang levels had a lifespan of eight centuries. Monsters, however, were different. Xiantian-level Diremonsters were capable of living up to a thousand years, and Wanxiang-level Diremonsters were able to live more than ten thousand years. As for Fiendgods, their lifespans were even more ridiculous. Fiendgods were innately ageless, and they didn't even have to worry about the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. However, their levels of comprehension were pitifully low; it was possible for them to spend a trillion years without improving even a tiny bit.

"Truly, all of the senior fellow disciples under Master's tutelage are extraordinary. Some were born incredible, while others met with incredible luck and destiny. I myself was only able to enter his tutelage due to having acquired the legacy of Daoist Threelives." Ning understood that amongst his fellow disciples, he was quite ordinary.

Still, there was a difference between him and the others. He was the disciple of both Patriarch Subhuti and Daoist Threelives...and his divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], was the ability which Daoist Threelives had relied on to dominate and roam the Primal World. Not even Patriarch Subhuti had ever created a divine ability on this level.

"The ninth floor." Silvermoon reached the ninth floor, then said with a laugh, "After you choose a technique from this ninth floor, you can go to the Three Realms Palace! After you learn a single technique from the Three Realms Palace, if you can train in that technique to its limit, you'll absolutely be able to roam the Three Realms fearlessly and become an awe-inspiringly famous figure."

\*

1. The sixth person is obviously Sun Wukong/Monkey King, who was born from a holy rock and was also known as the 'stone monkey'.
2. This 'story' is obviously Journey to the West.

# Chapter 11: Houyi's Archery

Ji Ning walked to the bookcase that only held sword-arts manuals, carefully flipping through the others. After confirming his decision, he then picked up the abridged version of the [Heavenraker].

"Senior apprentice-brother, I choose this one, [Heavenraker]," Ning said.

With the Heavenraker Swords in his hands, he would of course choose [Heavenraker].

"Fine." Silvermoon nodded, then waved his hand. A series of thick tomes appeared within his hands; this was the full version of the [Heavenraker] technique which Daofather Heavenrake had created. Ning's eyes immediately lit up as he accepted the tomes. As he opened them up, he couldn't help but lose himself within their contents. Ning couldn't be bothered to move around, and so he just sat down right there on the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace and began to analyze this sword-art.

.....

Summer left, winter came. A full year had passed.

During this past year, Ning didn't immediately go to the Three Realms Palace. After all, it wasn't as though the palace would run away. During this year, Ning defeated the ninth golem three more times, acquiring two more sword-arts manuals alongside the [Heavenraker]. These were all created by Daofathers, and were all some of the most supreme sword-arts of the Three Realms!

Ning carefully analyzed the techniques, gaining quite a bit from them. He mastered thirteen sword-stances in a row of the [Heavenraker]!

"It is time to go to the Three Realms Palace."

It was already night, but Ning set out from his Immortal estate. Over the course of this past year, he had further perfected his [Three-Foot Sword], and his level of insight into the [Heavenraker] had already reached a very high point. It would be hard for him to improve significantly within a short period of time, and so he decided to go to the

Three Realms Palace.

.....

The Three Realms Palace was an ordinary building that was just ten meters high...but it was the one of the most mysterious places in Mount Innerheart!

Ordinary disciples of Mount Innerheart could occasionally enter Patriarch Subhuti's Daoist monastery and listen to him expound on the Dao, but they would never, ever have the chance to enter the Three Realms Palace. Almost every single person allowed into the Three Realms Palace was an extremely famous figure of the Three Realms.

Snoooooore.

A ringing, snoring sound rang out, occasionally high, occasionally low. Outside this palace was a skinny old man who was lying on the ground, his fan across his chest as he slept. When Ning had first arrived at Mount Innerheart, he had seen this old man sleeping. It had been thirty years, but Ning had never seen him wake up.

It was as though this old man would slumber for ten thousand years at a time!

"Second senior apprentice-brother," Ning walked over, then called out respectfully.

After having lived here for a period of time, Ning now knew about this second senior apprentice-brother.

As Lord Jiang had said, "Of the many disciples which Master has accepted, his true heir is our second senior apprentice-brother! Second senior apprentice-brother trains in both the Dao and in Buddhism, and is a master of all techniques. He's even the only one who has ever learned Master's greatest divine ability, [Dream of the Three Realms]. I once asked Master to teach me this divine ability, but Master said that I cannot learn it. Of his students, only second senior apprentice-brother was able to learn it!"

Silvermoon had said something similar. "Don't be fooled by the fact

that second senior apprentice-brother is always there sleeping. In reality, his avatars are roaming throughout the Three Realms, leaving behind countless legacies. There are very few mysteries in the Three Realms which can deceive second senior apprentice-brother. As I see it, under Master's tutelage, eldest senior apprentice-brother might be the most powerful, but the second most powerful is definitely second senior apprentice-brother!"

Patriarch Subhuti had also praised him. "Your second senior apprentice-brother has done countless good deeds and accumulated nigh-infinite amounts of karmic merit. He truly wishes to do good, and has been like this since the era of the Primordial World. His karmic luck has already reached an utterly inconceivable level. Both the Buddhists and the Daoists have invited him on multiple occasions to join them." Even Patriarch Subhuti felt proud when mentioning his second disciple. Clearly, he was very satisfied with him!

After learning more about his second senior apprentice-brother, Ning also felt extreme admiration.

Because of the [Dream of the Three Realms], Ning's second senior apprentice-brother's avatar had visited almost all of the lesser worlds, and had left behind legacies in countless places. Thus, his name was extremely famous! Even in Ning's own world of Earth, his second senior apprentice-brother's reputation was as resounding as the thunder.

"Second senior apprentice-brother? Senior apprentice-brother Crazy Ji?" Ning called out. 1

"Who is calling my name?"

The skinny, napping old man rubbed his name, then opened his eyes languidly, seemingly to still be half-asleep. Beaming merrily, he said, "Oh, you are the disciple which Master just took in, that Ji Ning of the Grand Xia world?"

"Just so," Ning immediately said.

Of the figures the Old Patriarch's command, eldest senior apprentice-brother was unfathomably profound in power and without question the

number one figure.

Second senior apprentice-brother's reputation was known throughout the Three Realms, and he had accumulated tremendous karmic merits and had tremendous karmic luck. Both the Buddhists and the Daoists desired to take them into their leagues...but he continued to wander the Three Realms by himself, doing countless good deeds but belonging to neither the control of the Daofathers or of Lord Buddha.

"Master told me long ago that you would come, but I didn't expect you to come so soon. Just thirty years after joining, you have already come to my Three Realms Palace." Crazy Ji held that ragged fan in his hands as he nodded slightly. "Go in, then. You can choose from the divine abilities and secret arts inside as you please...but the Dao cannot be casually taught. You will have to pass some simple tests in order to learn them."

"I understand," Ning said. He had similarly had to pass some tests in order to acquire each of the sword-arts manuals he had chosen in the Divinities Palace.

.....

Crazy Ji watched as Ning entered the palace, a hint of light flashing through his half-asleep eyes. "This junior apprentice-brother...he has a pure and innocent heart, and is surrounded by karmic merit. And that sword-heart of his...ohoho, it really is not bad at all! But why has Master chosen him as a disciple?"

Crazy Ji understood Patriarch Subhuti more than anyone else, and he had learned more of Patriarch Subhuti's abilities than anyone else as well.

When Patriarch Subhuti chose a disciple, he always had a reason for it; he wouldn't just randomly pick someone. Perhaps the disciple was surrounded by tremendous karmic luck! Perhaps the disciple had an extraordinary heritage! Perhaps the disciple had an unearthly level of comprehension! There was always something!

"But it seems this junior apprentice-brother doesn't fit any of the usual criteria. Can it be that there is a huge secret regarding him?" Crazy Ji

smiled, then walked in as well. He was going to see what Ning would choose.

.....

Upon entering the building, Ning saw three tables scattered within it. These tables all had various abridged books placed in a casual manner atop of them. In total, there were only nineteen books. There were divine abilities, there were formations, there were secret arts...

“The complete [Torch Dragon’s Eye]?!” Ning immediately picked it up. Back in the world of the Grand Xia, Ning had only learned the first part of the technique. So the Three Divinities Palace had the full version!

He flipped the abridged version open. Atop the first page was listed a simple trial: “Go and clean the mountain paths of Mount Innerheart and you can learn this technique.”

“But but but...” Ning was speechless. “How can this be a trial?! And this is the same as for the techniques on the first level of the Divinities Palace!”

A supreme divine ability that could rank in the top hundred of the Three Realms...could actually be so easily learned? Just by cleaning the mountain paths? That wouldn’t even take half a day!

“It was Master who collected these divine abilities and secret arts in this Three Realms Palace,” Crazy Ji said as he walked in, a smile on his face. “He did this to teach them to his disciples. Naturally, he wouldn’t make the trials too hard.”

“But...this is still too easy. Even the trials for the seventh and eighth floors of the Divinities Palace are far more difficult than this,” Ning said.

“It is true that the ‘test’ for this [Torch Dragon’s Eye] is a bit too simple,” Crazy Ji agreed. “However, the Torch Dragon died a long, long time ago, after all. After he died, quite a few of the Daofathers acquired this divine ability! This is the first reason why the test is so simple. The second reason is that the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] is best-suited for Fiendgods like the Torch Dragon to train in. As for other living

creatures...to this very day, I've never heard of anyone who could reach a level of power in the [Torch Dragon's Eye] that the Torch Dragon had."

Ning now understood. This technique was not only difficult to train in, it was also fairly common amongst the various Daofathers, and so the 'trial' was made a simple one.

"This is the easiest of all trials," Crazy Ji said. "Junior apprentice-brother, keep looking at the others carefully. There are some truly supreme techniques here...and in fact, there are some that are unique in the Three Realms, to be found nowhere else."

Ning immediately began to look carefully at the others.

Soon...

Another manual suddenly caught his attention. The words atop the manual caused Ning's pupils to contract. The words were: [Houyi's Archery].

"Houyi?" Ning had naturally heard of this major power before. He immediately picked up the copy of [Houyi's Archery] and started to flip through it.

The name of this technique was very simple...but [Houyi's Archery] was indeed an incredibly powerful divine ability! In fact, it was even more powerful than the [Torch Dragon's Eye].

"Ever since Pangu established the universe, this divine ability has always been ranked in the top ten," Crazy Ji said. "This was created by True God Houyi, who used it to roam and dominate the Primordial World. However...the trial to acquire it is also the most difficult trial here in the Three Realms Palace!"

"Master actually has the main divine ability of Houyi?" Ning was astonished. This was ranked in the top ten! That meant it was on the same level as Ning's own [Starseizing Hand]?! Not even Patriarch Subhuti had ever developed a divine ability on this level.

"This trial truly is difficult." Ning immediately frowned upon seeing it. This trial was indeed the hardest of the nineteen trials here in the Three

Realms Palace. Ning then looked at the contents of the abridged book. "So this is what [Houyi's Archery] is all about..."

Ning immediately understood. Although [Houyi's Archery] and the [Starseizing Hand] both ranked amongst the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms, they were diametrically different.

The [Starseizing Hand] was used to make one's hands even more terrifyingly powerful than magic items. By the Second Cycle, one's hands would already be comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures. By the Third Cycle, they would be comparable to Pure Yang magic treasures! The raw power and strength of the [Starseizing Hand] was utterly astonishing!

But [Houyi's Archery] was a skill-type ability!

It was just like the [Windwing Evasion], in that it was a matter of skill and finesse. It required enlightenment and it required slow comprehension. Although it did include some clever ways to use divine power...it was more about skill and technique! Even Ki Refiners were capable of learning [Houyi's Archery], so long as they could comprehend the mysteries within it.

"It is much simpler to train in the [Starseizing Hand]; all I need to do is procure enough Five Elements essence, and my hands can become even more terrifyingly powerful, to the point where in the future I will even be able to crush stars with my hands," Ning mused to himself. "But this [Houyi's Archery]...it requires enlightenment!"

They truly were completely different. As a result, [Houyi's Archery] was extremely hard to train in. To this very day, aside from Houyi who had dominated the Primordial World with this divine ability, there had never been any other individuals who had been able to completely master this divine ability.

"Don't read it," Crazy Ji said, shaking his head. "Quite a few of Master's disciples have chosen this archery technique, but most of them were only able to gain a basic understanding of it. None of them have reached the level which the primordial Houyi once did. Go look at the other techniques first...and in the future, when you have some more free time,

you can try and learn [Houyi's Archery]."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

No matter what...this simple archery technique was still ranked in the top ten of the divine abilities created since Pangu established the universe! He had to learn it sometime! But of course, there was no rush.

Ning immediately began to read through the other tomes...and suddenly, yet another technique caused his eyes to light up. The words written atop this abridged tome were: [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

\*

1. This person is Ji Gong, aka Daoji, aka Li Xiuyuan. He was an eccentric monk that lived 800+ years ago that was famous for being extremely kind, seeming to have magic powers, but lived a life in violation of Buddhist rules due to eating meat and drinking wine. He is an incredibly famous semi-mythological figure in China that everyone has heard of. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji\\_Gong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji_Gong).
2. As explained long ago, Houyi is a mythological Chinese archer and an incredibly famous god. According to Chinese legend, long ago there were ten suns that baked the Earth and nearly killed everyone. Houyi ended up shooting down nine of the suns, sparing only the last one. He was acclaimed by mankind as a hero, but was punished by the heavens because the suns were the sons of a powerful God, and was later banished from the heavens. He was also the husband of Chang'e, who later became the goddess of the moon.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houyi>.

# Chapter 12: The Choice Within the Three Realms Palace

“The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] is the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level.” This line of characters on the abridged version instantly drew Ji Ning’s attention.

Number one in the three realms?

Ning had never before heard anyone bold enough to claim that a particular divine ability was number one in the Three Realms. This claim couldn’t even be made regarding the [Starseizing Hand] or [Houyi’s Archery]. But this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] actually dared to claim itself the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level!”

“The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], also known as the [Nine Cycles Arcane Art] or the [Seventy-Two Transformations]<sup>1</sup>. This divine ability allows one to completely and perfectly control one’s Fiendgod body. A basic level of skill in this art allows one to transform into anything in the world; this is why this divine ability is also referred to as the [Seventy-Two Transformations].”

Ning understood that this didn’t mean that the technique was really just limited to seventy-two transformations; rather, ‘seventy-two’ was another way of referring to the original name of ‘Eight-Nine’. It was a figurative number!

“This divine ability allows one’s divine body to become akin to a magic treasure, to the point of being like an unbreakable vajra! At its peak of power, the user can allow Pure Yang magic treasures or even supreme Protocosmic spirit-treasures to chop against the user’s body. At most, there might be a few sparks; the body itself won’t be harmed at all!”

Ning’s gaze turned heated as he read. Even Pure Yang magic treasures and Protocosmic magic treasures would only be able to cause a few sparks to fly? This was insane!

“This divine ability places tremendous stress on the body. Thus, only Fiendgod Body Refiners can train in it. You have to at least have reached the Primal level as a Fiendgod before you can train in the First Cycle.”

“At the Primal level, you can train in the First, Second, and Third Cycles.”

“At the Void level, you can train in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Cycles.”

“At the Empyrean God level, you train in the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Cycle.”

“Once the Third Cycle is mastered, then the body will be comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure! Even ordinary Celestial Immortals would find it difficult to wound you.”

“Once the Sixth Cycle is mastered, then the body will be comparable to a Pure Yang magic treasure! By relying on it, one can become truly famous in the Three Realms!”

“Once the Ninth Cycle is mastered, the body will be comparable to the most supreme of Pure Yang magic treasures, comparable to a Protocosmic spirit-treasure! It can truly be described as an unbreakable vajra at that point, and one can truly roam about the Three Realms without fear. Aside from major powers, no one can harm you at all. Even major powers will have to use special techniques in order to break your vajra-like body.”

The description on the manual caused Ning to pant in excitement. This was far too formidable. Manmade magic treasures were divided into Mortal-rank, Earth-rank, Heaven-rank, Immortal-rank, and Pure Yang rank, with the Pure Yang rank being the limit. Above Pure Yang magic treasures were Protocosmic spirit-treasures!

Protocosmic spirit-treasures were born from the natural universe itself. However, this didn’t necessarily mean that all Protocosmic spirit-treasures were superior to all Pure Yang magic treasures. After all, amongst manmade Pure Yang magic treasures, there were treasures which truly possessed insane levels of power. In fact, some were created by fusing the extracted essence of multiple Protocosmic spirit-treasures, such as the Starseizing Manor itself, which had used quite a few

Protocosm spirit-treasures in the forging!

Thus, there were grades of Protocosmic spirit-treasures as well. They were also divided into low-grade, middle-grade, high-grade, and top-grade.

Supreme Pure Yang treasures were generally comparable to middle-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures!

Ning couldn't help but sigh in amazement. "Protocosmic treasures!" To make one's body comparable to a Protocosmic spirit-treasure! No wonder one's body could be described as unbreakable as a vajra, and why even major powers of the Three Realms would have to use special methods in order to break past this divine ability.

Whoosh! Ning continued to flip through the pages and read.

"This divine ability was jointly developed by the spiritual leaders of both Buddhism and Daoism, who wished to create a divine body that was comparable to that of the great god Pangu's."

"Per the predictions of the spiritual leaders of Buddhism and Daoism, this arcane art should have a total of Twelve Cycles."

"The first three were for the Primal level; the next three were for the Void-level, and the Seventh to Ninth Cycles were for the Empyrean God level, while True Gods would train in the Tenth to Twelve Cycles. The True Gods of the Three Realms, when using this divine ability, should theoretically have divine bodies that were comparable to Pangu's. Unfortunately, although their predictions were idealistic, despite spending countless amounts of effort and time on this technique, they were still unable to come up with anything past the Ninth Cycle..."

"And so, this divine ability only has Nine Cycles!"

Upon seeing the description within the tome, Ning couldn't help but sigh in amazement yet again. So the [Seventy-Two Transformations] had such an illustrious history. It had been jointly developed by the spiritual leaders of Buddhism and Daoism!

"Pangu...the same Pangu who established the universe?" Ning sighed in amazement. If one could use a divine ability to strengthen one's body to

Pangu's level, that would be utterly insane. However...even the most supreme of experts in the Three Realms were only able to develop a total of nine of these Cycles. Mm...it truly can be described as the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level." Ning couldn't help but nod to himself.

It lived up to its reputation!

.....

After reading the description, Ning noticed that the [Seventy-Two Transformations] was quite similar to his own [Starseizing Hand].

The Second Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand] made one's hands comparable to Immortal-ranked magic treasures.

The Third Cycle, Pure Yang magic treasures.

The Fourth Cycle, supreme Pure Yang magic treasures or middle-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

The Fifth Cycle, supreme Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

The Sixth Cycle...it allowed a pair of hands to effortless seize and crush stars! One truly could use one's bare hands to annihilate an entire world. As far as the major powers of the Three Realms were concerned, the reason why Daoist Threelives had become so famous and powerful was only because he had managed to develop the Sixth Cycle of his [Starseizing Hand]; only then had he been able to kill so many Fiendgod Daofathers during that great tribulation!

"My [Starseizing Hand] only focuses on a pair of hands, while the [Seventy-Two Transformations] trains the entire body." Ning realized what the difference was.

Because the [Seventy-Two Transformations] was only designed for the Empyrean God level, it could only be described as the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level.

The [Starseizing Hand], however, had a level meant for True Gods. Thus, it could be described as one of the top ten divine abilities in the Three

Realms.

After reading this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] tome, Ning set it aside and began to flip through the other books.

### [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe] 2

This was an axe-technique developed by one of the major powers of the Three Realms known as Xingtian, the Castigator of Heaven. However, it was ranked as a divine ability, because just like [Houyi's Archery], it largely involved profound and arcane ways to apply divine power. This complicated way of applying divine power, when matched with the axe technique, would produce the true power of [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe]!

This divine ability was ranked as one of the top hundred in the Three Realms.

.....

### [Vairocana Guardian Halo].

This was a protective divine ability developed by the spiritual leader of Buddhism, Lord Buddha. It was extremely powerful, and at the True God level it was even slightly more powerful than the [Seventy-Two Transformations]. However, the [Seventy-Two Transformations] required a large amount of magic artifacts, and so the number of people who had ever trained in the [Seventy-Two Transformations] all the way to the Ninth Cycle was very low. Although at the same level, this [Vairocana Guardian Halo] was a bit weaker in power, it didn't require as many magic treasures; one only need to focus on comprehending and mastering it.

.....

### [Thundergod's Eye].

This divine ability attracted Ning's attention as well. This was because Ning had previously trained in the [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], which was a simplified version of the [Thundergod's Eye]. Upon training in the [Thundergod's Eye], when the user unleashed the eye, it could be used to

see even the ghosts in the Netherworld Kingdom. Nothing could escape the gaze of this divine eye, and when mastered to an extremely high level, one could unleash ‘Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies’. Not even someone with an unbreakable, vajra-like body would dare to take a blow from this divine lightning!

But of course...just like the other supreme divine abilities, to train in this one to the point of unleashing the ‘Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies’ was harder than hard.

.....

#### [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm].

This was a truly powerful divine ability of Buddhism, which could be trained all the way up to the True God level. If one mastered it, then an entire major world could be stored on one’s palm! When one struck out with one’s palm, one would be striking out with the entire power of a major world. If any enemy were to land atop the massive palm, even if they flew for an extremely long time, they would still find it difficult to fly out from this palm. 3

This was because the palm itself was the size of an entire major world!

But of course, compared to the [Starseizing Hand], it was still a bit weaker. The [Starseizing Hand], when trained to its limit, could effortless annihilate an entire major world.

.....

#### [Heavenslayer Sword Formation].

This was a true sword-formation technique. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was also a true sword-formation technique, but compared to this [Heavenslayer Sword Formation], it was much weaker. The [Heavenslayer Sword Formation] was incredibly complicated, and it required the forging of a Heavenslayer sword-diagram, as well as a total of eighty-one Immortal swords...but it was extremely powerful, ranked as one of the supreme skills of the Three Realms. However...only someone with the power of a Daofather could produce the required sword-diagram.

.....

Ning's gaze burned hotter and hotter as he continue to read.

There were a total of nine divine abilities: [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe], [Vairocana Guardian Halo], [Thundergod's Eye], [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm], [Torch Dragon's Eye], and two more.

There were also a total of ten secret arts, formations, and other varied techniques.

"Eh? There are actually no manuals focused exclusively on sword-arts, saber-arts, archery, axecraft..." Ning was surprised by this. For example, [Houyi's Archery] wasn't purely archery; it also included a very complicated way of activating and transforming divine power. This was why [Houyi's Archery] was considered a divine ability! The same was true for [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe].

If the unique methods of employing divine power were stripped from these divine abilities, then [Houyi's Archery] and [Xingtian's World-Destroying Axe] would most likely only be placed on the ninth level of the Divinities Palace.

Crazy Ji beamed merrily as he watched. He could tell that Ning had been completely captivated by these techniques.

There were five techniques Ning wanted: [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm], [Thundergod's Eye], [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], and [Torch Dragon's Eye]!

For one's palm to be able to encompass an entire major world, a major world that completely belonged to him and him alone...how could Ning not feel desire for this technique?

[Thundergod's Eye]...Ning had long ago started to train in the elementary version of this divine ability.

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was even critical! After all, the path of Immortal cultivation was a difficult and dangerous one. To reach the Empyrean God level meant that one would be comparable to figures like

Lu Dongbin and be an expert of the Three Realms. It was far too difficult to reach the True God level and become a major power like Daoist Threelives.

Thus, this number one divine ability for those below the True God level, this [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], was absolutely necessary.

“Junior apprentice-brother,” Crazy Ji said.

“Second senior apprentice-brother.” Ning turned to look at him.

“Are you aware that you are not permitted to simply learn as many techniques within the Three Realms Palace as you please? Every single fellow disciple is limited to just a few,” Crazy Ji said.

“I know.” Ning nodded. “Silvermoon and Lord Jiang both spoke to me of this.”

Generally speaking, each person could only learn two or three divine abilities or secret arts from the Three Realms Palace before Patriarch Subhuti would forbid them from learning more!

“Right. To be greedy is unwise!” Crazy Ji nodded. “Any one of these techniques, when trained to the peak, will allow you to roam and dominate the Three Realms. Even the seemingly unremarkable [Thundergod’s Eye], when trained to the limit, will allow you to control ‘Divine Lightning of the Violet Skies’ . Thus, if you are too greedy, the end result will be that you will be unable to train any technique to its limit and end up an ordinary figure. If you focus on training in one, however, you will be able to train to the limit and dominate the Three Realms.”

Ning nodded. He understood this principle.

Ning pondered for a time...then picked up an abridged version. “This is my choice from the Three Realms Palace.” This book was of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]!

The number one technique for those below the True God level. Ning had to choose it!

Crazy Ji laughed and nodded. “Alright. Look at the trial first.”

“Right.” Ning immediately flipped to the first page of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], carefully looking at the trial details. Ning immediately frowned upon doing so. This trial was many times more difficult than the trial for the [Torch Dragon’s Eye]; after all, that trial was just to sweep the mountain paths.

\*

1. The Seventy-Two Transformations is the name of the legendary ability which Sun Wukong learned from Patriarch Subhuti and which made him into the badass that he was.
2. Xingtian is one of the early gods in Chinese mythology. He was decapitated by the Yellow Emperor, the legendary forefather of the Chinese race, but he remained alive and continue to fight with axe and shield, transforming his nipples into eyes and his navel into his mouth – seriously.
3. This is yet another reference to Journey to the West and Sun Wukong; when fighting with Lord Buddha, Sun Wukong and Buddha made a bet where Buddha bet him that Sun Wukong would be unable to jump out from his already quite large-looking palm in a single leap. Sun Wukong, capable of leaping 108,000 kilometers in a single bound, accepted the bet...and lost. Buddha then transformed his massive hand into a mountain, trapping Sun Wukong beneath it until his future master, the Tang Monk, came to rescue him.

# Chapter 13: Void-Level

The trial was explained in just two simple lines of words:

Go and take on a disciple of great karmic virtue, surrounded by at least three hundred meters of golden karmic light.

Go and kill ten Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals who have committed great sins, surrounded by at least three hundred meters of bloody sin light.

"This..." Ning frowned.

To take on a disciple? To go kill?

Someone who had accumulated so much karmic virtue as to be surrounded by three hundred meters of golden karmic light was far too rare. Generally speaking, such individuals would have tremendously good luck, and so they would have joined a school long ago, and most likely a major school at that. After all, the larger a clan or sect, the more they would desire to take on a disciple with that much karmic virtue. This would bring the entire sect fortune!

Was he supposed to steal a disciple from someone else?

As for killing someone...the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations which Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals had to face were of frightening power. The more sin one had accumulated, the greater the power of the calamities and tribulations. Thus, most Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals would limit the amount of sin they would accumulate; they wouldn't dare act in excessively sinful ways, and would in fact try to do good as much as they could. Only truly fiendishly demonic figures who truly had formidable Dao-hearts and unearthly levels of power would dare engage in wanton slaughter and draw countless amounts of sin to them! This type of Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal definitely wasn't easy to deal with.

And he didn't have to just kill one...he had to kill ten!

"Taking on a disciple and killing others...second senior apprentice-

brother..." Ning looked towards Crazy Ji.

"To take on a person with great karmic virtue as a disciple and to teach that person is in and of itself an act of karmic virtue. Killing great sinners, in turn, is also an act of karmic virtue. Both of these things are good for you." Crazy Ji nodded. "Although it might take a bit of time...there's no need for you to rush. Go down into the world and spend some time searching. If you haven't succeeded in one year, then go ahead and take ten."

Ning nodded. "The so-called going 'down into the world'...where am I supposed to go? The three thousand major worlds and the trillion minor worlds?"

"You haven't left Master's tutelage; you are not permitted to leave this estate-world," Crazy Ji said. "The so-called going 'down into the world' refers to this estate-world itself. It is absolutely not inferior to a major world in any way. You can spend a million years wandering it without seeing everything within."

"Alright." Ning immediately said, "Thank you for your guidance, second senior apprentice-brother. I'm going to leave now."

"Go ahead." Crazy Ji waved his fan.

.....

Ning didn't immediately go into the rest of the estate-world; first, he returned to his own Immortal estate.

Within the Still Room in the underwater estate.

Rumble...the stone door swung shut.

Ning sat in the lotus position atop the netherwater jade bed, his heart quickly calming down. The excitement he had felt upon previously seeing so many divine abilities in the Three Realms Palace gradually dissipated. After he was completely calm, Ning began to ponder.

"Although there are many divine abilities and secret arts in the world, it is true that one should focus on a few. If you learn many of them but are

unable to focus on them, there's no point." Ning calmly reflected on each divine ability and secret art he had learned."

"Learning the [Vairocana Guardian Halo] is a waste of time; it is of very little help to me. Although the [Buddha-Realm Within the Palm] technique is quite powerful, I already have the [Starseizing Hand]; training in that divine ability won't increase my power by much." Ning quickly began to mentally discard one divine ability after another as he focused on which techniques were worth his energy and which ones would bring the maximum amount of power to him.

"There are two I must train in."

"The first is the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Once I train in it, my body will be as unbreakable as a vajra, just like a magic treasure. I won't need to waste any divine power; most divine abilities require divine power to be used, such as my [Starseizing Hand], which uses up a shocking amount of it. The Nine Cycles of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], however, causes the body itself to be made as hard as a vajra. The fact that this does not consume divine power in battle is a tremendous advantage! I can just stand there, and my foes will be unable to do anything to me."

Ning mentally discarded all of the other techniques within the Three Realms Palace.

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] focused on defense! It made the body as unbreakable as a vajra, and it didn't use up any divine power.

[Houyi's Archery] focused on long range combat! It was one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

The [Starseizing Hand] focused on close combat! It was also one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

"Defense, long range combat, close combat...that's enough." Ning nodded gently. "If Master permits it, I will also choose the [Torch Dragon's Eye]."

The [Torch Dragon's Eye] was neither defense, nor long range combat, nor close combat; it was an extremely powerful support technique! And

not only was it able to provide support skills, it was also a divine ability with an extremely simple ‘trial’; to simply clean the mountain roads a single time. However, Ning didn’t dare choose it just yet. After all, no one could say how many techniques Patriarch Subhuti would choose from the Three Realms Palace.

If Ning were to choose the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] and the Old Patriarch then forbade him from choosing any more, he would feel miserable.

First, the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Then, [Houyi’s Archery]. Lastly, if possible, [Torch Dragon’s Eye].

“But why is it that the Three Realms Palace doesn’t have a single evasive divine ability?” Ning furrowed his brows. The Windwing Evasion was just the simplified version of the divine ability [Garuda’s Wings]; after having spent thirty years at Mount Innerheart, he now felt that the Windwing Evasion was far too weak and wasn’t suitable for him to use at all.

He had already completely mastered the Windwing Evasion, but the technique itself was far too low-level.

“When I next see Master, I’ll ask him to provide me guidance and teach me an evasive divine ability,” Ning mused to himself. “If there are no other options...then I’ll go find one in the Divinities Palace.”

The Divinities Palace had quite a few divine abilities. Ning had completely focused on studying sword-arts, and hadn’t chosen a single other type of manual from the Divinities Palace. He had wanted to choose his other techniques from the Three Realms Palace, but who would’ve expected that the Three Realms Palace wouldn’t even have one evasive technique? He would first go ask his master; if his master wasn’t able to provide him with one, then he would go to the Divinities Palace to find an evasive divine ability. Although those techniques were fairly average amongst the upper tiers of the Three Realms, they were still hundreds to thousands of times better than the likes of the Windwing Evasion.

.....

"Whew." Ning seated himself atop the netherwater jade bed, a mist arising around his body. The mist condensed into a figure; it was the black-robed Ji Ning. Ning's Primaltwin!

"It is time for my Primaltwin to become a Void-level Earth Immortal."

During the past thirty-one years at Mount Innerheart, Ning's Primaltwin had remained at the peak Primal stage. The reason he didn't advance further was because his master, Patriarch Subhuti, had warned Ning: "Ji Ning, I know that you acquired five million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, but you should not be in a hurry to make your Primaltwin break through to the next level. Your Primaltwin was formed from the Sole-Ki of Primalwater, and has an extremely high level of aptitude for understanding the element of Water. Even though both are at the Primal level, there is a difference between your true body and your Primaltwin in terms of how fast you will comprehend Water. Thus, you should have your Primaltwin remain at the Primal level for at least ten years."

"Understood." Ning had immediately acknowledged his master's orders back then.

And indeed, it had been as his master had said; the Primaltwin's aptitude for Water was quite incredible. Aside from the Dao of the Sword, Ning's current highest level of attainment was in Water. Water far surpassed Fire...and the weakest were Wind and the Grand Dao of Qiankun!

Because he saw the aforementioned advantages, and because there were no fights on Mount Innerheart whatsoever, Ning had never been in a rush to make any breakthroughs. He wanted to let his Primaltwin remain at the Primal level for as long as possible. His master had said ten years, but Ning had spent more than thirty years at this level. But now, he was going to leave the mountain and go kill enemies.

He wasn't going out to kill ordinary Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals; he was going to kill figures who were surrounded by sin, going to kill terrifying, demonic figures that were surrounded by three hundred

meters of bloody sin light. Ning naturally was going to make ample preparations, and thus he was going to have his Primaltwin advance to the Void level.

Actually, during these past thirty-one years, the Primaltwin had also been training in the [Darknorth Sutra]. However, since this sutra was created by a Daofather of the Great Firmament, the Primaltwin remained at the peak Primal level and had not reached its limit, despite having painstakingly trained for all these years! If it had still been training in the [Flowing Watersource] of the Black-White College, most likely thirty or so years after reaching the Primal level it would have been time for a breakthrough to the Void-level and to become an Earth Immortal.

Given that Ning was training in the even more profound [Darknorth Sutra], if he had slowly cultivated as he had planned without using any spirit-pills or liquefied elemental essence, he would've had to spend at least eighty or ninety years before training to the early Void level.

Swoosh.

A jade bottle flew out, landing in front of Ning. The bottle's stopper opened on its own.

"Fortunately, I have five million kilograms." The Primaltwin Ning willed it, and wish a swoosh, a flood of liquefied elemental essence flew out from the jade bottle. The mouth of the bottle was only as thick as a finger, but as the essence flew into the air the stream became more than thirty meters thick. It flew straight towards the Primaltwin Ning, then formed into a vortex around him.

The essence vortex swirled into Ning, then disappeared.

Within the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater inside the Primaltwin Ning's body, a blurry void of a Zifu region could be seen. Within this void, there was a sea of elemental ki which had an enormous Turtle-Snake within it. On the back of the Turtle-Snake, flames could be seen blazing. These flames were Primal Fire!

Rumble...

The Zifu sea began to surge and swell as refined elemental essence began to surge to the ‘skies’ above them. The countless stars in the sky shone down with rays of light, all centered upon the giant Turtle-Snake. The Primal Fire on the Turtle-Snake’s back instantly and dramatically expanded!

Crackle...

The Primal Fire roared and blazed, causing the Turtle-Snake to begin hiss and screech.

Fifty thousand kilograms. A hundred thousand kilograms. A hundred and fifty thousand kilograms...more and more of the liquefied elemental essence was absorbed, and as Ning’s level of power began to rise, his rate of absorption began to rise as well. The Primal Fire began to blaze with greater and greater fury.

A long time later...

WHOOSH.

It was like a planted seed suddenly sprouting up beyond the dirt. From within the blazing, heaven-towering flames on the back of the Turtle-Snake, a single, slender, delicate golden lotus emerged from the cracked turtle shell.

The turtle shell was like the soil. The Primal Fire was like the sunlight and water. The golden lotus slowly grew out and grew larger.

This golden lotus was extremely small; compared to the heaven-towering flames on the back of the massive Turtle-Snake, it was extremely unremarkable. However, elemental ki of unbelievable purity swirled around the golden lotus, far surpassing the purity of the elemental ki Ning had in the past. Then, the entire Turtle-Snake began to grow dim as large amounts of its essence began to flow towards the golden lotus, causing the lotus to continuously grow larger and larger. As it continued to grow, the luster of the shell of the Turtle-Snake began to disappear as it grew dark.

“The early Void level.” Ning’s Primaltwin soul had advanced from the

Primal Turtle-Snake to the ‘Goldlotus’ level.

Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals all had Goldlotus souls for their Primal soul!

If one wished to become a carefree, unbound Immortal, one had to plant the seeds of the Goldlotus within the flames!

“Continue!” The Primaltwin Ning was like a black hole, absorbing as much liquefied elemental essence as there was on offer. Only after a long time did he stop.

The Primaltwin Ning pointed towards the distance. Instantly, the jade bottle on the ground became stoppered up again.

“The amount of liquefied elemental ki needed to train in the [Darknorth Sutra] is absolutely astonishing. However, my elemental ki is now up to two levels more pure than that of an ordinary Earth Immortal.” Ning didn’t feel sorry for how much he had used up. “I used a total of 2.5 million kilograms of liquefied elemental essence in training from the peak Primal stage to the late Void stage! Around two million kilograms remain in this jade bottle of mine. Right...I should leave it for Uncle White and Little Qing.”

The reason why he had halted at the late Void stage was because upon reaching the peak of the Void stage, the Celestial Tribulation would be impending.

“Time to go down into the world.”

Rumble...

The door to the Still Room slid open, and Ning’s true body walked out.

# Chapter 14: Going Into the World

Ji Ning stood outside the entrance of his Immortal estate.

“Uncle White. Little Qing.” Ning sent a mental message to the two, and they soon arrived.

These two had previously been elsewhere at the Divinities Palace, discussing the Dao with the other disciples of Mount Innerheart.

“Master, why have you summoned us? We were in the middle of this great discussion about the Dao,” Little Qing said unhappily. The Whitewater Hound just looked at Ning, waiting for him to speak.

“I am going to go down into the world and roam about this estate-world,” Ning said. “It will be anywhere from a year to ten years before I return.”

“Whaaa?! Go down into the world?!?” Little Qing said with great excitement, “Great, great! Although Mount Innerheart is nice enough, and I have the chance to listen to the Old Patriarch discuss the Dao here and have many divine abilities and secret arts to peruse...it is way too relaxed and boring here.”

Ning shook his head. “I’m going down into the world on official business. You and Uncle White need to seize every moment of this incredible chance you have to study here at Mount Innerheart. After all, we are going to go back to the Grand Xia in the future...and I don’t know when we will return. A chance to study here is something that most people can’t even dream of.”

After they went back to the world of the Grand Xia, it would not be easy for them to come back here. It wasn’t up to them; it was up to the Old Patriarch. Without his permission, no one could locate this estate-world.

“Oh.” Little Qing nodded in understanding.

“Ning, child, be careful as you roam the world. This estate-world is not one whit inferior to the world of the Grand Xia, and experts are as common as the clouds within it. I imagine there are quite a few Celestial

Immortals as well,” Uncle White instructed.

“Don’t worry.” Ning nodded.

“Master, why are you going down into the world? What’s this official business all about? Oh, if it’s really important, then don’t worry about telling me.” Although this was what Little Qing said aloud, her eyes were sparkling. Clearly, she was quite intrigued.

Ning laughed. “This is a test which Master gave me. I need to go down into the world, accept a disciple, and kill some people.”

“Accept disciples? Kill people?” Little Qing and Uncle White both grew intrigued.

“These two jade bottles each have a total of 750,000 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.” Ning waved his hand, and two jade-green bottles appeared. “Uncle White, Little Qing, the two of you have reached the peak Primal level in recent years as well. However, from the peak Primal level to the Void level requires a long period of time. Although the techniques you use are the techniques from Mount Innerheart, you will still probably need a few decades before succeeding. With this essence, the two of you will be able to reach the early Void stage and also stabilize your foundation.”

The Whitewater Hound hesitated momentarily. Little Qing, however, immediately accepted her bottle with glee. “Thanks, Master! Master, you are the best. I’ve been hankering to reach the Void-level and become an Earth Immortal.”

“Take it, Uncle White,” Ning said.

Here at Mount Innerheart, there was no way to acquire more liquefied elemental essence. Otherwise, given his current level of power, it wouldn’t be too hard to sell some treasures and procure some. In the future, his true body, Uncle White, and Little Qing would all rise to the late Void level.

As for the peak Void level?

Ning was in no rush because he often heard Patriarch Subhuti expound

on the Dao and had learned that every Celestial Tribulation was tailored to the specific person. The more monstrous a genius, the more ridiculously powerful a Celestial Tribulation would be. For someone like him, an expert who had divine abilities such as the [Starseizing Hand] and who was blessed by luck, the power of his divine tribulation would be similarly astonishing!

He had to make ample preparations!

He had to raise his level of comprehension. The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], and the [Starseizing Hand]; they all had to reach the highest level of power possible prior to the Celestial Immortal level. He had to prepare enough magic treasures and curios as well. His Dao-heart also needed to be stronger...in short, in the face of the Celestial Tribulation, no matter how many preparations he made, it wouldn't be too much. No one wanted to be defeated by it, after all!

Upon being defeated, one would naturally perish. Even if one managed to luck out and become a Loose Immortal, under the eternal, remorseless trials of the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, death would be the only result.

The Celestial Tribulation...

This was a true tribulation that would determine one's destiny! The greatest tribulation there was on the Immortal path! Those who succeeded would soar into the heavens and truly escape the binds of the Three Realms. They would be carefree and unbound, no longer subject to the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations. But those who failed...they were finished.

.....

On the mountain paths of Mount Innerheart.

The Whitewater Hound and Little Qing sent off Ning together. Ning didn't bid his fellow disciples farewell; after all, this was just a trial, and a short one at that. To his fellow disciples who had lived for countless years, this was indeed a very brief trip.

"No need to send me any further," Ning said with a smile. He then transformed into a streak of light and flew out of the giant, levitating Mount Innerheart. He flew downwards towards the vast, endless world.

"Ning, my son, be careful."

"Master, be careful." The Whitewater Hound and Little Qing watched as Ning flew away. They watched until he disappeared.

.....

Ning stared downwards towards the countless cities that dotted the vast world. Prior to him leaving Mount Innerheart, Little Qing had gone to a good friend she had made, an ordinary disciple of Mount Innerheart who was a Void-level Diremonster, and acquired a fairly detailed map of the entire Crescent world!

"The Crescent world is as large as the world of the Grand Xia. Above an endless sea, there are three enormous continents. These three continents are all slightly smaller than the continent of the Grand Xia, but combined they are comparable to it." Ning pondered to himself. "Mm. To the Star continent!"

The Crescent world had a total of three continents. The Cloud continent, the Flame continent, and the Star continent.

The one which was below the airborne Mount Innerheart was known as the Cloud continent. The Cloud continent was the continent with the best governance, whereas the Flame continent and the Star continent were in states of utter chaos. They had many small kingdoms, as well as many Diremonsters, clans and sects that caused a state of turmoil to be maintained.

"Great sinners can be found amidst great chaos. Perhaps I might also find an individual of great karmic merit who has escaped notice," Ning mused to himself.

Whoosh!

Space rippled around him, and Ning then disappeared from midair.

.....

The Crescent world. The Star continent.

A flying shuttle was flying through the skies at high speed. Within the shuttle were a group of cultivators, with the leader being a man and two women. The other six were all servants and guards.

“Our Qi Empire has been abandoned to those monsters. Why won’t they let us be?!” A violet-robed woman spoke out, her eyes filled with rage. “When we hide in mountain wilds, the Diremonsters still find us and chase us. Our imperial clan of the Qi Empire is now extremely puny; we aren’t a threat to them at all. Why won’t they let us be?!”

“Little sister.” A black-robed maiden next to her shook her head. “The monster king who has taken over our Qi Empire has given the order to completely exterminate our imperial clan of Qi. None are to be spared. The countless monsters under that monster king’s command are naturally going to chase us and kill us. Only by killing us will they have rendered merits and be rewarded by the monster king.”

“So are we just going to keep running and running?” The violet-robed maiden gritted her teeth. “I’ve had enough of this life of fleeing. I started fleeing when I was a child, and it has now been several decades. I’ve been running away this entire time. I have had enough. Enough! Let’s go all out against these demons. Big brother, second sister, let’s fight them!”

“Shut your mouth.”

The tall, muscular man who was on his feet growled softly, “Our imperial clan has existed for tens of thousands of years; now, only the three of us still remain. Even our uncle ended up dying when he fought against those demons to try and protect us. We are alive because of the sacrifices of countless subordinates. We absolutely cannot just throw our lives away.”

“Then what should we do? That monster king is so powerful; how are we supposed to escape him? And where can we run to?” The violet-robed woman said with rage.

The tall man growled, “By now, there’s no other choices for us. The only choice is...to go to the Viledragon River!”

Instantly, everyone fell silent.

The two younger sisters who were behind him as well as all of the servants fell silent. Their eyes were filled with amazement.

Viledragon River?

The Star continent was vast and boundless. There was no way these three imperial scions and their servants could fly out from the Star continent. Within the Star continent, however, Viledragon River was one of the most famous and largest rivers of all!

Viledragon River cut through a large half of the entire Star continent. It was incomparably wide; even at the narrowest points, it was at least eight hundred kilometers across, and up to a thousand or more at its thickest. As far as its length...given that it cut through most of the Star continent and was a sinuous, undulating river, one could imagine how unfathomably long it was!

According to legend, after a primordial Viledragon was killed, its body was transformed into this river. But of course, this was too extravagant a legend and there was no way to verify its authenticity. Still...Viledragon River truly was bizarre. Anyone who moved within a thousand kilometers of it would become completely unable to fly, and also become unable to use evasive techniques based off the Five Elements. Supposedly, even Celestial Immortal Patriarchs who neared this Viledragon River would also be unable to fly or use evasive techniques.

From this, one could see how bizarre Viledragon River was!

In addition, Viledragon River also had some dangerous zones inside of it which even Immortal cultivators did not dare to charge into.

“There’s no way to fly within Viledragon River, and no way to use evasive techniques. It will be very hard for the monsters to catch us within it,” the tall man growled. “I trust that they will also be nervous, and won’t dare to chase us all the way into Viledragon River.”

"But...that's Viledragon River," the black-robed maiden said hurriedly.

"We're trying to find a way to stay alive in an impossibly lethal situation. It doesn't matter how dangerous Viledragon River is! In addition, Viledragon River is enormous, and it cuts through more than half of the Star continent. Actually, most of it is quite safe; only a few parts of it are dangerous. If we are lucky, we can find a safe island and start life anew there. We can build up our power on the island, and in the future, we can slaughter that monster king and take back the Qi Empire," the tall man said. "Second sister, little sister...we have no other paths to take."

The two girls gritted their teeth and nodded.

"Life or death...it comes down to this toss of the dice," the black-robed woman said.

"Right. Let's do it." The violet-robed maiden gritted her teeth as well.

.....

Rumble...

Viledragon River. The waters of the river frothed and bubbled with unnatural turbidity.

"Viledragon River."

"Big brother, up ahead is Viledragon river."

"Here we are."

The man, two women, and six guards quickly arrived at the banks of Viledragon River. They stared at the turbid waters. They could already sense the invisible, nameless ripples of power emanating from the entire Viledragon River. They couldn't help but feel terrified; Viledragon River was simply too famous.

"Hey, big brother, second sister, hurry and look over there." The violet-robed maiden pointed at the distant, wide Viledragon River. Aboard the river, a wooden boat was slowly sailing forward. Atop the wooden ship was a fur-clad youth who was holding and playing a bamboo flute.

Everyone present was an Immortal cultivator; given their perfect vision, they were able to see this person clearly.

"This youth actually dares to sit on a boat on Viledragon River and leisurely play the flute?" The black-robed woman was extremely startled as well.

"If he is an Immortal cultivator...no matter how powerful he is, he should still be extremely cautious right now." The tall man frowned. "Can he be an ordinary mortal?"

Although Viledragon River was reputed to be dangerous, that was only in some parts of it. There were often some stupidly brave mortals who would try to show off their valor and sail on a ship atop Viledragon River. And indeed, there were some mortals who were lucky enough to be able to sail on Viledragon River for months, then come back to tell the tale.

"Big brother, that youth is coming over here!" The violet-robed maiden called out in alarm.

The fur-clad youth's ship, which had previously been following the currents of the river, suddenly turned. The oars on the boat began to strike against the water, kicking up waves of white froth as it moved closer.

.....

Ning used his hands to steer the boat, beaming as he stared at the individuals on the distant shore. His divine sense had covered this region long ago, and he saw that amongst the crowd, there was a female servant who was emanating a golden light detectable only by his divine sense. The golden light of karmic virtue was at least nine hundred meters long and was utterly astonishing.

"How very lucky I am! I found a person of great karmic virtue quite quickly." Ning felt incomparably delighted.

# Chapter 15: The Survivors of the Qi Empire

After having descended onto the Star continent, Ning had sailed down the Viledragon River, continuously sweeping his surrounding region with divine sense. He had already searched for nearly half a month, but he hadn't found a single person of great karmic virtue or great karmic sin. Today, he had been leisurely relaxing on his boat while playing his bamboo flute...but he had actually run into a person of great karmic virtue.

Whoosh. The oars of the boat continued to sweep forward, sending the boat towards the shore. Ning walked out of his boat and onto the shore.

As the distant group of imperial Qi clansmen walked over, they saw Ning disembark through a very ordinary method. They couldn't help but feel even more convinced that he was an ordinary mortal. The weakest in their group was at least a Zifu Disciple; why would they view an ordinary mortal with any care? And yet...this mortal was walking straight towards them.

"Big brother, he's actually walking towards us," the black-robed princess sent mentally.

"A puny little mortal...if we were back in our imperial palace, he would've been killed long ago for trying to stand in our way." The violet-robed princess had a hint of darkness in her eyes. After having fled for so many years, her heart had become filled with hate and darkness.

"Don't cause unnecessary trouble." Their leader, the tall youth, just spread out his majestic aura. He was the most powerful figure in this squad of theirs, a Wanxiang Adept.

An invisible aura of power came crashing downwards. Any mortal faced with this aura of a Wanxiang Adept would instantly quiver and become utterly terrified.

"Let's go." After having released his aura, the imperial prince led his two younger sisters and his guards towards Viledragon River. They couldn't be bothered to act against a mortal as they were fleeing.

“Haha...” Suddenly, loud laughter rang out.

The imperial prince, the two princesses, and the guards all turned to stare in astonishment. That fur-clad youth who they had assumed to be a mortal was standing there, laughing. The fleeing imperial prince of Qi naturally understood right away that this backwater youth was clearly not a mortal. A mortal would have been quivering supinely on the ground by now.

Rumble...

An invisible aura of might and power swept out from Ning like an enormous tidal wave, smashing towards the imperial Qi group.

All of their faces changed. This backwater youth...he was no mortal. He was someone whose power vastly outstripped theirs.

“My name is Shi Feng. These are my family retainers. Dare I ask who you are, senior?” The tall imperial prince immediately spoke out with great respect. At the same time, he produced a tiny bead of water on his finger. He pretended to scratch his eyes, but in reality he pressed that bead of water onto them.

Rumble...

The imperial prince lifted his head to take a look. He saw the ripples of power emanating from the backwater youth, then immediately sent mentally to his two little sister, “Ruyu, Ruhui, judging from the ripples this backwater youth is emanating, he should be at the peak Primal level...and he doesn’t seem to have any ill intentions. We absolutely cannot make an enemy out of him. Each time we use up one of our protective treasures, that is one less that we will never get back.”

“Understood, big brother,” the black-robed princess sent mentally.

“He’s just a Primal Daoist. If our imperial father were here...how could a Primal Daoist like him possibly behave so arrogantly in front of us?” The violet-robed princess felt relaxed; she no longer felt afraid. They were of the imperial clan, after all; although their nation had collapsed, they had quite a few treasures on them. They had remained alive for several

decades despite being continuously pursued; this was proof of their ability to stay alive.

Clearly, they were confident in being able to escape from a single Primal Daoist by using up some treasures.

.....

"I am Darknorth. For us to meet here today is destiny." After releasing his aura, Ning then said, "Come aboard my boat and drink a few cups of wine?"

Ning could tell that these individuals had moved towards Viledragon River with the intent of sailing atop it.

However....

Viledragon River was extremely famous, and of these nine only a single was at the Wanxiang Adept level. The other eight were all merely Zifu Disciples. Why was it that they dared to come to Viledragon River?

Others might fear Viledragon River, but Ning was Patriarch Subhuti's disciple. He often chatted with his fellow disciples, and had learned about some of the secrets of this Crescent world. Naturally, he had no fear of Viledragon River.

"Since senior Darknorth has invited us, we shall naturally comply." The imperial prince immediately accepted the offer. They were going sailing to begin with; with a peak Primal Daoist by their side, they might have a helper.

Whoosh. Ning waved his finger, and instantly the wooden boat expanded in size, expanding to a three hundred meter long ship. The nine figures immediately boarded the large ship.

Atop the deck of the ship appeared chairs, tables, fine wine, and spirit-fruit.

"Sit." Ning sat down at the host's position. The imperial prince and the two princesses all sat down, while the other guards remained standing.

"Shi Feng." Ning's gaze fell upon the female maidservant whose body

was covered by the golden light of karmic virtue. The golden light surrounding her appeared incomparably majestic and vast; it was at least nine hundred meters long. That was as long as some of Earth's rivers were wide; from this, one could imagine how utterly astonishing this young woman's karmic light of virtue was.

"She is your maidservant?" Ning pointed at the maidservant standing behind the seated violet-robed princess.

The imperial prince smiled. "Indeed."

"What is her name? What is her history? Tell me of her," Ning said. As Ning saw it...it wouldn't be too hard for him to take this maiden away from these people. However, this was his first time taking on a disciple! Ning naturally wanted to get an idea as to what sort of personality this maiden had. Her golden light of karmic virtue might be a result of her actions in her previous life; it was hard to say what she was like in this life.

If she had a negative personality, Ning would rather go find another person with karmic virtue.

"Her name is Qi Xiaoyu 1; she came from a backwater place," the imperial prince said with a laugh. "An elder of my family saw that she was talented, and so took her on as a disciple when she was very young and taught her cultivation. The elder doted on her fiercely; although she is a servant in name, in reality she can be described as my junior apprentice-sister."

"Qi Xiaoyu?" Ning raised an eyebrow, then turned to look at her. Her appearance was quite pretty; although she was inferior to Yu Wei, she was still quite a beauty. In addition, there was a resolved look in her eyes; clearly, her Dao-heart was excellent as well.

"Qi Xiaoyu, come here and sit." Ning waved his hand, and another table filled with fine wine and spirit-fruit appeared next to him.

Qi Xiaoyu stood there, hesitating slightly as she looked towards the imperial prince and the two princesses.

The imperial prince instructed, “Senior Darknorth has already given you instructions; why don’t you go to him?”

“Alright.” Qi Xiaoyu immediately walked obediently towards the table, but she didn’t touch the wind or the spirit-fruit.

Ning looked towards Qi Xiaoyu. He could sense that this maiden had an invisible sort of magnetism that caused one to naturally gravitate towards her and want to befriend her. “Is this what it is like to be blessed with tremendous karmic virtue? This is my first time seeing her, but I can’t help but feel kindly inclined towards her.”

“Xiaoyu,” Ning spoke out.

“Senior Darknorth,” Qi Xiaoyu replied with great respect.

“Tell me about your life, from youth til now,” Ning said.

Qi Xiaoyu looked towards the imperial prince and the two princesses. In truth, this request of Ning’s was rather excessive. Still, the imperial clansmen didn’t wish to offend Ning. This was one of the benefits of being powerful; as long as Ning didn’t go way too far, the imperial prince and princesses wouldn’t quibble too much.

The imperial prince nodded gently.

Qi Xiaoyu immediately said, “Senior, when I was young, I lived in a tribe with a few tens of thousands of individuals known as the Bluecliff tribe. The chief of the Bluecliff tribe was my great-grandfather. When I was young, I was without a worry in the world. I was very happy...”

As she spoke, a look of happiness appeared on Qi Xiaoyu’s face.

“However, my tribe suffered an attack from Diremonsters. Our tribesmen were all forced to flee in defeat. My family all died, and as I was fleeing, I encountered Master...”

Ning listened quietly. At his current level, Ning could clearly sense the changes in Qi Xiaoyu’s soul! If she lied, Ning would immediately be able to tell.

.....

As Ning was revealing his power, forcibly inviting the imperial Qi clansmen onto the ship, then asking Qi Xiaoyu about her history...

In the skies more than ten thousand kilometers away, there was a giant black ship. The giant black ship had twelve black-armored figures aboard it.

The giant black ship had a single flag atop its mast; the flag had the diagram of a pair of flaming wings.

Local monsters and Immortal cultivators would immediately be able to tell...that this was the legendary Flamewing Guard, which many powers were in absolute dread of.

“Captain, the survivors of the imperial Qi clan really know how to flee. It has been so many years, but they still haven’t been wiped out yet. Our Flamewing Guard have been chasing them for this entire time.” A skinny man with scales on his face let out a sigh as he spoke.

“They are indeed skilled at flight. For the Qi Empire to be able to take over a territory of a million kilometers over the course of just a few tens of thousands of years, and for them to have been able to kill so many Diremonsters at the Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal level...how many treasures must they have? In addition, given how rapid their rise to power was, there are many who believe that the founding emperor of the Qi Empire had acquired an enormous treasure trove. Regardless of whether or not that is true, these fleeing survivors most assuredly have many treasures on them. We’ve chased after and attacked them so many times, but they’ve always been able to flee.” A massively muscular black-armored man replied.

Next to him was an alluring woman who had a plume on her head. She laughed beautifully. “Captain...no matter what, more and more of the surviving imperial Qi clansmen have been killed by us during the pursuit. The last time we attacked them, we killed the final Primal Daoist the imperial Qi clansmen had. The only three survivors of the imperial Qi clan are the crown prince and those two princesses.”

“They don’t even have Primal Daoists with them; they are going to die

soon."

"If we can kill the crown prince and the two princesses, we will have rendered a great merit."

Although the survivors of the imperial Qi clan were very weak...they represented the last remnants of their clan. Many of the treasures of the Qi Empire, and perhaps even the Dao-Repository of the Qi Empire, were undoubtedly being carried by the crown prince.

"Eh?" Suddenly, the massively muscular black-armored man was startled. He waved his hand, and a fireseed appeared within it. The fireseed was trembling.

"We are within ten thousand kilometers of the survivors of the imperial Qi clan!" The black-armored man revealed a look of delight.

"Hahaha, this time we are going to catch them all."

"We've rendered incredible merits."

"They don't even have a single Primal Daoist with them. Wanxiang Adepts? Killing them is as easy as chopping lettuce!"

The soldiers of the Flamewing Guard were all extremely excited.

There had long been rumors that the reason why the Qi Empire had risen to power so quickly was because they had acquired an enormous treasure trove. As a result, even the Flamewing King had grown envious, and he had led his Diremonster army to annihilate the entire Qi Empire! He had seized all of the important treasure troves of the Qi Empire. As for the surviving imperial clansmen, the Flamewing King couldn't be bothered to kill them personally; he simply ordered his subordinates to handle it.

"If we were to kill these survivors, we can just offer the most precious treasures to the King. As for the other treasures..." The twelve soldiers of the Flamewing Guard looked at each other and smiled. Their eyes flashed with greed and viciousness. Their monstrous king was savage, and his soldiers were also quite savage as well.

\*

1. Xiaoyu means Little Rain.

# Chapter 16: Flamewing Guard

The waves of the vast Viledragon River crashed down like the stampede of ten thousand stallions.

Aboard the giant ship. After chatting for a period of time, Ning felt as though his mind had been settled. The little lass named Qi Xiaoyu had very little experience; she was as pure as a sheet of white paper. In addition, she was clearly quite respectful towards the young man and the two sisters; she continuously watched for the young man's signals before acting.

"Based on what she said, she's only trained for twenty years. Those blessed by great karmic virtue are indeed talented. And...she isn't a bad person." Ning nodded lightly.

He didn't require that his disciples be perfect; however, they couldn't be evildoers. Given his current level of enlightenment, it was very simple for him to judge and assess a mere Zifu Disciple.

"I like Xiaoyu very much," Ning said. "Since Xiaoyu's former master has already perished...I wonder, Shi Feng, if you would be willing to give her up and let her become my disciple."

The waves of the vast Viledragon River continued to crash down resoundingly...but within the ship, things had fallen silent.

Qi Xiaoyu was completely speechless. She hurriedly shook her head repeatedly as she looked towards the crown prince.

The crown prince and the princesses had changed looks on their faces.

"This Darknorth really thinks too highly of himself," the violet-robed princess sent angrily. "He actually wants to take Xiaoyu as his disciple. Xiaoyu is blessed by karmic virtue; she can provide karmic luck to our entire imperial clan. How can we give her away to a random Primal Daoist?! Hmph, even if an Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal wants to take away Xiaoyu, we still shouldn't agree hastily, to say nothing of this Darknorth!"

“Big brother,” the black-robed princess sent mentally as well, “What should we do? We definitely can’t let Xiaoyu just be taken away, but this Darknorth wishes to take her as a disciple...what should we do?”

The crown prince was frowning. The roots of their imperial clan were very deep, and in the past, they had Primal Daoists of their own! A simple sweep of divine sense had allowed them to know that ‘Qi Xiaoyu’ had an utterly astonishing level of karmic virtue. Thus, they had done everything they could to take Qi Xiaoyu into their fold, and had even bestowed her with the imperial surname of ‘Qi’. They had shown her incomparable favor, causing her to feel incomparably grateful.

“Xiaoyu is an important chess piece. This Darknorth is just a Primal Daoist...we absolutely cannot give her to him,” the crown prince sent mentally.

.....

As the crown prince and the princesses were conversing mentally, Qi Xiaoyu said hurriedly, “Senior Darknorth, I received great benevolence from Master and cannot betray...”

Ning said, “So long as you are willing to allow Xiaoyu to be my disciple, then I will repay you with magic treasures.” As he spoke, he suddenly produced ten Heaven-ranked flying swords that emanated watery ripples of power. The strength of these ripples caused everyone present to feel a sense of pressure.

“Ten high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords. What do you say?” Ning asked.

“It seems this seemingly rustic Daoist Darknorth is actually quite wealthy,” the violet-robed princess sent mentally.

“Heaven-ranked magic treasures are very important to Primal Daoists. It isn’t easy for one of them to produce ten. It seems he truly does want to take Xiaoyu as his disciple. Unfortunately for him, as far our imperial Qi clan is concerned, ten high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords are nothing,” the crown prince sent back.

Although the three feigned looks of amazement, in their hearts they remained quite calm.

Seeing this, Ning frowned slightly. “How about a hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords?”

Instantly, a dense cluster of a hundred Heaven-ranked flying swords appeared in the air above the ship. The ripples emanating from each Heaven-ranked flying sword were enough to cause the Wanxiang Adept and eight Zifu Disciples present to feel an enormous sense of pressure.

“This, this...”

Qi Xiaoyu was completely stunned. A hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords? To take her on as disciple, this man was willing to take out this many magic treasures? Although she wasn’t willing to betray the clan, the actions of this ‘senior’ Darknorth who looked like a youth still caused her to feel a hint of delight. For this senior Darknorth to be willing to offer such a high price was testament to how much he valued her.

“A hundred!” The crown prince and the princesses felt desire now. Although they had quite a few treasures on them, over the course of decades of pursuit after the destruction of their country, with so many of their experts having perished and their treasures having been taken...the total number of treasures they had was now limited.

A hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords was worth five hundred thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence!

“This Primal Daoist has actually taken out this many Heaven-ranked flying swords.” The violet-robed princess’s eyes were blazing. “Big brother...”

“The three of you!” Ning controlled the hundred Heaven-ranked flying swords which hovered above them as he frowned and barked, “This is enough. Don’t go too far!”

The crown prince naturally wanted these items. But he knew quite well that these hundred Heaven-ranked flying swords would be of almost no

use to them in their flight. Even if they went to a city and traded it for some elemental essence, what good would that be? They already had some protective, fleeing items; if they bought a few more copies, that wouldn't make a huge difference.

"Senior Darknorth," the crown prince said respectfully, "For you to give up a hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords in exchange for having Xiaoyu follow you as her disciple is of course acceptable. However...it isn't that we aren't willing, it is that after Xiaoyu became a Zifu Disciple, she swore an oath to the Dao of the Heavens to be loyal to my clan. For you to force her to leave would be to cause her to violate her oath. She will immediately perish."

Ning frowned. "The oaths a servant swears to the Dao of the Heavens... but the master can generally gift the servants to others."

It was extremely common for major clans to give away Deathsworn, for example. Thus, when servants swore an oath to the Dao of the Heavens, they would generally say that they would follow the clan leader's orders in all things.

"That is true. However, that requires the clan leader of my Stone clan to agree. I cannot agree in his stead," the crown prince said.

Ning's face instantly sank. As it did, the hearts of the crown prince and the others all clenched.

Ning waved his hand. The hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords in the sky all vanished, and he gave the crown prince a cold look. "You are lying."

"Lying?" The crown prince was flabbergasted. "I didn't lie..."

"You say that you are Shi Feng? That was a lie! You said that you are unable to permit Xiaoyu to be my disciple and that you need the clan leader to agree; this, too, was a lie!" Ning said coldly.

The crown prince was startled. The two princesses were shocked as well. Indeed, the crown prince's name was not Shi Feng; rather, it was Qi Rufeng! His surname was 'Qi'.

The only members of the imperial Qi clan left were the three of them; thus, the crown prince Qi Rufeng was the leader of the clan. As long as he agreed, he could give Qi Xiaoyu to Ning.

"I didn't lie." The crown prince wanted to keep up his false front.

"Would you dare swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens stating that you didn't lie? So long as you dare to swear this oath, I will gift you with those hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords and leave on the spot." Ning's face sank even further.

Qi Rufeng and his two sisters both felt pressure now.

"Since Darknorth won't accept a soft refusal, let's give him a hard one. Ten years ago, back when the old servants were alive, he would've been killed long ago by now." The violet-robed princess sent an angry mental message to the other two.

Right at this moment...

"Eh?" Ning suddenly turned his head.

"Huh?" The crown prince and the others turned their head as well.

A group of figures had appeared on the distant shores of the Viledragon River. There were a total of twelve figures, all dressed in black armor and staring in their direction. On their bracers were emblazoned the logo of a flaming wing.

These twelve warriors stared in their direction. Their captain, the massively muscular black-armored man, was holding a flamewing bug in his hands, a cold smile on his face. He pointed towards the distance. "The survivors of the Qi Empire are over there. Do it!"

"Kill."

"Kill!"

All of them emanated incomparably savage auras. The twelve soldiers instantly transformed their shape. One became an enormous horned rhino, another into a three-tailed fox, a third into a coiling serpent, a fourth into a white-furred bear...but they all shared a single commonality.

All of them wore black armor. With the giant horned rhino at the center, the other soldiers spread out, filling and cycling their elemental ki through their Dao-armor and joining together into a whole.

Rumble...

An enormous venomous bug that had fiery wings suddenly appeared in the skies.

.....

“The Flamewing Guard.” The faces of the crown prince and the others changed dramatically. They had suffered miserably for the past few decades under the pursuit of the Flamewing Guard; the Flamewing Guard was their nightmare, a nightmare they had never been able to escape. The Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals of their clan had all perished; even all of their Primal Daoists had perished.

They were the only ones left. How could they resist the Flamewing Guard?

Although this was just a small squad of the Guard, the imperial clansmen knew quite well that each squad of the Flamewing Guard was led by a Primal Diremonster as well as eleven Wanxiang Diremonsters who were capable of joining together into a Dao-soldier formation. After they assumed the formation...even peak Primal Daoists would probably find it hard to do anything to these Diremonsters.

“What should we do?” The black-robed woman frantically sent mentally.

“There’s no way to use evasive techniques here on the Viledragon River, and there’s no way to fly. We have to rely on the ship.” The crown prince was panicking as well.

“Have this Darknorth go block them. He is a peak Primal Daoist; he can definitely buy us some time,” the violet-robed princess sent mentally.

Right at this moment, the enormous bug with flaming wing charged straight into the Viledragon River. It flew through the river, moving as fast as lightning. It was about to arrive.

"Hurry up and die!" An enraged bellow rang out from the enormous flamewing bug.

"This is my ship." Ning stood on the prow of the ship, staring at the enormous flamewing bug that was flying towards him. "Hurry up and beat it."

The crown prince and the others instantly felt overjoyed.

"Wonderful. This Darknorth has actively gone out to engage it."

"Let him help us block them."

"Ideally, this Darknorth and the Flamewing Guard will kill each other. We can then acquire all of Darknorth's treasures."

.....

The Flamewing Guard were famous for their savagery. Local cultivators and monsters would've fled long ago in the face of their arrival. They didn't expect that today, they would run into someone who didn't fear them at all. Behind them stood the fearsome Flamewing King! What they didn't realize...was that behind Ning stood Patriarch Subhuti.

"Since you dare to try and stop the Flamewing Guard, you can die with them!" The green eyes of the enormous flamewing were filled with viciousness as it let out a shrill, enraged screech.

Whoosh. The flamewing bug soared towards the boat, and a blurry green fog appeared around it, causing the crown prince's group to be filled with terror. They hurriedly retreated, setting down a formation in the surrounding area to defend. The hideous insectoid head of the massive flamewing bug shot outwards through the mist, attacking Ning atop the board of the ship.

Ning shook his head. "You truly are seeking death!"

BOOM!!!!

Aboard the ship, the formerly ordinary-looking Ji Ning suddenly exploded forth with a terrifyingly powerful presence. The world itself seemed to instantly grow silent, and even the powerful, turbid waves of

the Viledragon River went still. In fact, the waves and even sea spray suddenly froze mid-motion. The enormous flamewing bug was paralyzed in its attacking posture as well.

The imperial Qi clansmen who were hiding behind their formation were all frozen as well. Some had frozen looks of astonishment on their faces, others had mouths open, while still others were mid-step. They were all frozen.

The entire world had turned still.

The wind had stopped. The water had stopped. The people had stopped. The monsters had stopped. Everything had stopped.

That vast, terrifying presence caused everyone present to feel terrified. The crown prince and the others couldn't even change their facial expressions...but shock and terror could be seen in their eyes.

In this region, only Ning alone was the same as he had been before. He stood there atop the prow of his ship, staring at the giant flamewing bug before him. He shook his head and sighed. "It was you who sought death. You have no one else to blame."

# Chapter 17: Forced

The twelve Diremonsters that had formed into the massive Dao-soldier formation of a giant flamewing bug were all filled with terror.

This formation was formed by a Primal Diremonster leading eleven Wanxiang Diremonsters. Through the Dao-soldier formation, they were extremely powerful when fighting together, and only foes who at least had the power of a Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals were able to do anything to them. They had held this fur-clad youth atop the ship's prow in no regard...but now, just standing there without moving at all, the fur-clad youth had unleashed such an aura of majestic power that they were completely frozen!

"Where did this expert come from?!"

"How...how can he be so terrifying?! What level of insight into the Dao has he reached?!"

The monsters were completely stunned. They had held the fur-clad youth in no regard and wanted to just dispose of him...but now they realized they had stomped down on a giant steel plate that was harder than any they had ever seen.

Boom! Boom! Boom! One streak of light after another appeared in the skies. They instantly pierced through the enormous flamewing bug and the twelve Diremonsters within it. The Primal Diremonster, the Wanxiang Diremonsters...they all instantly perished.

.....

Ning stood at the prow of his ship, looking at the twelve dead Diremonsters. He couldn't help but shake his head and chuckle.

Killing these twelve Diremonsters was as easy as waving his hand. They had actually dared to assault him without even saying a few words to him; naturally, Ning had shown no mercy in dealing with them.

As for why Ning was laughing...

It was because he was thinking back to the ancient Fiendgod he had

met back in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. "When I had encountered that ancient Fiendgod, the Dao Domain the Fiendgod unleashed was enough to freeze everything, causing me to be unable to move...and now, I just used the exact same sort of technique to kill a squad that was far more powerful than I was back then, led by that Primal Diremonster."

Dao Domains...through one's mastery and insights into a Dao, one could use the power of the natural world to form a Domain that solely belonged to one's self!

Dao Domains, Dao-Realms, Grand Dao Domains...although they had differing levels of power, in truth, they were all variations on Dao Domains. They shared the same principles.

Ning's Rainwater Sword Domain was also a sort of Dao Domain.

At a higher level, after one mastered a complete Dao-Path, one's mastery over the energy of the natural world would become even stronger; this was what was known as a Dao-Realm.

But of course, that only referred to lesser Daos!

There were also Grand Dao Domains. They belonged to Grand Daos, and were actually even more powerful than Dao-Realms. And beyond them were the Grand Dao-Realms! After one completely mastered an entire Grand Dao, one would be able to summon an even more terrifying amount of natural energy than Ning was currently able to. In the face of this sort of power, even Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals would probably be paralyzed.

.....

Dao Domains were linked to one's insight into the Dao. The higher one's level of insights, the more natural energy of Heaven and Earth one could activate. As one's insights into a Grand Dao increased, the power of the Grand Dao Domain would similarly increase, until finally it reached the Grand Dao-Realm level.

Ning's level of insight into the Dao of the Sword was already at

Immortal Northwalker's level! This level of insight was even superior to the level which that ancient Fiendgod of the Gaol Mountains had possessed. Thus, just by using his Dao Domain, he had been able to completely suppress those twelve Diremonsters who had been in a Dao-soldier formation, to the point of making it completely impossible for them to fight back.

.....

Everything was back to normal now. The waves of the Viledragon River continued to crash forward, and the large ship continued to sail forward.

The survivors of the Qi Empire, standing atop the deck of the ship, stared towards Ning in utter terror and unease.

"The survivors of the Qi Empire?" Ning sat down relaxedly, then said slowly, "Are you still trying to hide it, given the situation? Are you still going to try and tell me that your name is Shi Feng?"

The crown prince Qi Rufeng exchanged glances with the two princesses. The guards behind them looked towards Ning with fear in their gazes as well. The look in Qi Xiaoyu's eyes was especially complicated. This Daoist Darknorth wanted to take her on as his disciple, and the power he had just displayed was truly inconceivable.

"Big brother, what should we do? When the Flamewing Guard attacked, they revealed our true identities. This Darknorth knows that we are of the imperial Qi clan," the black-robed woman sent mentally.

"Word of the destruction of our Qi Empire has long since spread. This Darknorth must know very well by now that we are the lucky survivors of the imperial clan. He might act to seize our treasures," the violet-robed princess sent frantically. "We need to seize the advantage and use up our magic treasures to kill him."

"Idiocy. Although the remnant treasures of the Qi Empire are in my hands, I have no confidence in being able to deal with this Darknorth." Crown Prince Qi Rufeng sent back with anger, "Just by relying on his Dao Domain, he was able to summon enough energy from the Heavens and the Earth to cause a squad of the Flamewing Guard to be completely

unable to move. His insights into the Dao are superior to those of even supreme Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals. Although judging from the ripples of power emanating from him, he should still be a peak Primal Daoist, his power is definitely at the Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal level. And given that he was able to so easily bring out a hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords, he certainly has powerful treasures of his own. I imagine that he has the power of a supreme Loose Immortal or Earth Immortal."

His nation had once spanned a million kilometers. The final survivors, including the crown prince of the nation, naturally had quite a few formidable treasures of their own.

"Then what should we do?" The violet-robed princess was panicking now.

"We only have two Greater Teleportation Dao-seals; at most, two of us can escape," the crown prince said. "This Daoist Darknorth hasn't moved to attack us yet; we can still negotiate with him."

"Right. Let's negotiate," the violet-robed princess said hurriedly.

"We have no other choices," the black-robed princess sent as well.

.....

Ning watched as the crown prince and the two princesses stealthily sent mental messages to each other. Previously, when they had first boarded the ship, they had felt mentally superior to Ning; they had believed him to merely be a Primal Daoist, and that by relying on their imperial treasures they could deal with him. Now, however, they didn't even think about fighting back against him.

"Senior." Crown Prince Qi Rufeng said respectfully, "I imagine that since you have heard what the Flamewing Guard said, you already know the truth. It is true. We are indeed of the imperial Qi clan."

News of the destruction of the Qi Empire was extremely wide-spread. Virtually all of the at least somewhat powerful cultivators in the surrounding million kilometers knew about this matter. However,

although Ning had arrived at the Star continent half a month ago, he actually didn't know about this matter at all.

Ning calmly sipped his wine as he listened.

Qi Rufeng continued nervously, "Ever since our Qi Empire was destroyed by the Flamewing King, the imperial Qi clan has been fleeing. The Flamewing Guard has never let up on their pursuit of us...and so we had to be cautious. I was forced to report a false name, 'Shi Feng', to you. My true name is Qi Rufeng! A prince of the Qi Empire!"

"Prince?" Ning gently murmured this word, but continued to look at Qi Rufeng.

Qi Rufeng hurriedly continued, "This is my little sister, Qi Ruyu. This is another little sister, Qi Ruhui."

Ning glanced sideways at the two; the black-robed princess was Qi Ruyu, while the violet-robed princess was Qi Ruhui.

"Wise. You didn't continue to lie." Ning just sat there. "If you continue to lie...I probably will no longer have the patience to talk to you. I'd just kill you and take away the treasures of your imperial Qi clan."

The crown prince and the princesses felt their hearts tremble as they heard this.

Ning said calmly, "I wish to take Qi Xiaoyu as my disciple. I imagine that all you need to do is nod and agree to it. Do not lie to me. If you lie...I will know."

The difference in power between the two was simply too vast. In addition, Ning's soul was extraordinarily powerful; this was why Ning was so confident. If the crown prince's soul was a bit stronger, however, then Ning would no longer be so sure of himself.

"It is true. So long as I agree, I can indeed give Qi Xiaoyu to you, senior," the crown prince said respectfully.

"Then why haven't you done so?" Ning snapped softly.

The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, just shook his head.

"You want those hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords?" Ning looked at him, then said calmly, "I can give them to you. However... don't go too far. Taking your life would be as easy as turning over my hand."

"I don't want flying swords." Crown Prince Qi Rufeng looked at Ning. "I want you, senior, to protect our imperial clan for a hundred years! If you agree to protect us for a hundred years, then I will immediately allow Qi Xiaoyu to take you on as master, and...after a hundred years, I definitely won't hinder you in any way. If you want to leave then, you can!"

Ning's face sank, and a cold light flashed through his eyes. "You are courting death!"

"Hahaha..."

Qi Rufeng actually began to laugh, laugh in a mad manner. "Courting death? Right, I am indeed courting death. Senior, you have no idea how pitiful the lives of myself and my two little sisters have been. Ever since the Qi Empire was annihilated many decades ago, we have been under constant pursuit. Every day, we are filled with terror and unease. One clansman after another has perished, one elder relative after another has died, and one sibling after another has perished. Many imperial Qi clansmen had fled with us...but now, only three of us remain. I'm the only surviving male of our entire imperial Qi clan."

"Hahaha, it's enough. I've had enough! My little sister here is already unable to endure the stress; she wanted to fight those Flamewing Guards to the death. Although Ruyu has never said it aloud...I know that she is tired as well."

"And in truth, I am even more tired!"

Qi Rufeng stared at Ning, tears in his eyes. "I'm the final male survivor. The three of us are the only survivors of the entire imperial clan, and I am the most powerful of our group, a Wanxiang Adept. All of the burdens are on my shoulders. Where shall we go? How shall we rebuild our empire? How shall we take revenge? All of these burdens are crushing me down. I've had enough. Enough! You can say that I'm courting death or that I'm

crazy. Whatever! I've given you my terms. If you protect us for a century, then I will give my servant, Qi Xiaoyu, to serve you as your disciple, senior."

"Qi Xiaoyu is a person of tremendous karmic virtue, and more than nine hundred meters of golden light surrounds her. When the elders of our clan discovered her, they were absolutely delighted and believed that she would be able to provide luck to our entire imperial clan."

"I will not so easily let Qi Xiaoyu go..."

"Either protect us for a century, or kill us and let us reunite with our mother, our father, and our many relatives."

Qi Rufeng's eyes were filled with tears, but his voice was filled with absolute determination.

He was staking it all. He was throwing their lives into this wager. He was tired...he didn't want to continue to flee in terror like this. He could tell how powerful Ning was; with Ning as their guardian and protector, they would have a much better chance at surviving.

"Big brother." The black-robed princess's face was streaked with tears as well.

"Big brother, don't beg him. Let's just end it all here." The violet-robed princess gritted her teeth, madness in her eyes.

Ning frowned. This was trouble. He hadn't expected that the survivors of the imperial Qi clan felt such despair, that they had nowhere to go. He had thought that a simple threat would have been enough...but they were now staking everything against him!

A hundred years?

No chance. Ning had only spent thirty years on Mount Innerheart, and he had agreed to reunite with Yu Wei back in the world of the Grand Xia as soon as possible. How could he possibly extend their reunion by a century?

# Chapter 18: Treasure Trove

The violet-robed princess glared at Ji Ning. Gritting her teeth, she said, “If we die, Xiaoyu dies as well. When the master dies, the servants shall not live either!”

Ning instantly felt a loathing for this violet-robed princess, Qi Ruhui. However, Ning knew that since the imperial Qi clan had known all along that Qi Xiaoyu was a figure with great karmic virtue, that they definitely would firmly fasten her to the sides of the imperial clan. Once the imperial clan perished, Qi Xiaoyu would probably truly die as well.

Ning shut his eyes.

The ship became completely silent. Everyone stared at Ning, waiting for his response.

The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, waited with nervousness and anticipation. “Given how powerful this senior Darknorth is...a hundred years shouldn’t be anything to him.” How could he imagine that Ning had only lived for a few decades?

Utter stillness!

The crown prince and the princesses were all extremely nervous. Qi Xiaoyu felt restless and uneasy as well.

Ning suddenly opened his eyes and looked towards the crown prince, Qi Rufeng. “I agree...to protect you for a year or to kill the Flamewing King. Once I complete either of these two conditions, I will take Qi Xiaoyu away.”

“This is my response to you. If you agree, than you shall release Qi Xiaoyu to me to be my disciple. If you refuse, then I’ll kill you and take away your imperial treasures.”

“Do you agree or do you refuse?” Ning stared at Qi Rufeng.

“Senior, it’s just a hundred...” The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, couldn’t help but begin to argue.

"You only need to tell me...if you agree or refuse?" Ning repeated coldly.

The crown prince and the two princesses exchanged glances. There were no other options now! If this Daoist Darknorth was to protect them for a year...within this year, they might have a chance for a game-changer to occur.

"Fine." Qi Rufeng gritted his teeth.

Ning nodded lightly. This was as he had expected. If he didn't give them any benefit at all, then they probably really would rather die. If he gave them at least a little bit...their desire to live would take the upper hand! And in truth, Ning wasn't planning to actually waste a full year; he would rather just go and kill that Flamewing King!

After killing the Flamewing King, his promise would have been completed.

"Then why haven't you given Qi Xiaoyu her freedom?" Ning looked at the crown prince.

The crown prince couldn't help but mumble, "Please swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens to attest to your promise, senior, so as to put us all at ease."

Ning's face sank, and a true killing intent burst forth from him. "It seems you really do wish to die!"

An oath to the Dao of the Heavens was simply too powerful and restrictive; thus, Immortal cultivators definitely would not casually swear any such oath.

The crown prince and the princesses could all tell that Ning had truly lost all patience. Terrified, the crown prince hurriedly said, "We, we are willing to believe in your promise, senior."

"Qi Xiaoyu, from this day forth, you shall obey the instructions of senior Darknorth. There is no longer any connection between you and the imperial Qi clan," Qi Rufeng said.

Instantly, the ripples of the Dao of the Heavens descended within her

subconscious mind. Clearly, the oath which Qi Xiaoyu had sworn in the past to the Dao of the Heavens had been fulfilled.

Qi Xiaoyu fell to her knees. "Xiaoyu shall never forget the benevolence you have shown me, your Imperial Highness."

Ning, standing to one side, just sighed to himself. Qi Xiaoyu truly was quite faithful. However...based on what she had told him regarding her experiences, Ning had already discovered quite a few suspicious indicators. The tribe which Qi Xiaoyu had belonged to as a child had tens of thousands of tribesmen; a tribe like this would rarely be attacked by Diremonsters!

Xiantian-level Diremonsters wouldn't be able to do it, while higher-level cultivating Diremonsters wouldn't be willing to cause sin to gather around them. And yet...the large tribe in which Qi Xiaoyu had lived in as a child was attacked and destroyed. Even all of her family had been slain...and then she just so happened to run into an expert of the imperial Qi clan.

How could things be so coincidental? The imperial Qi clan was in the middle of fleeing for their own lives as well; how could such a coincidence happen?

"Perhaps the destruction of the tribe which Qi Xiaoyu lived in as a child had something to do with the imperial Qi clan," Ning mused silently to himself.

.....

Qi Xiaoyu knelt down towards Ning as well. "His Imperial Highness has instructed Xiaoyu to follow you in the future and listen to your commands."

Ning looked at Qi Xiaoyu, then said, "Remember this. From this day forth, you have regained your freedom. You are neither a servant nor a slave; do not act like one." Ning continued, "I have never before taken on a disciple; if you take me as your master, then you shall naturally become the senior disciple under my tutelage. This is an important matter for you, but also an important matter for me. I have no wish to force this upon

you; if you are willing, then you may bow to me as my disciple. If you are unwilling, then I will send you off to some other places with Immortal cultivation sects; I trust that they will fight over the chance to recruit you.”

Ning had his own pride. There was no way he would force his very first disciple to accept him as master. Given how large the Crescent world was, he could simply go and find another person of great karmic virtue.

In truth, Qi Xiaoyu was extremely intelligent. She could tell...that the crown prince actually treated her rather indifferently. The second princess was a bit better, while the youngest princess actually loathed her. The only person in the entire imperial Qi clan who had treated her with sincerity was her master...but her master had been killed by the pursuing Flamewing Guard long ago.

As for this Darknorth who stood before her...Qi Xiaoyu could tell how much this ‘senior Darknorth’ valued her. He had immediately taken out a hundred Heaven-ranked flying swords for her, and now he had promised to protect the imperial Qi clan. This was as good as becoming enemies with the Flamewing Guard.

All of this was for the sake of taking her on as his disciple. And if she didn’t accept him as her master, he was still going to have to carry out his promise to protect the imperial Qi clan for a year. From this, she could tell...he truly cared very much about her own will and her own choice.

“Your disciple greets you, Master.” The young maiden immediately fell down to her knees and kowtowed.

Ning felt a surge of joy in his heart. He couldn’t help but laugh, then nodded his head and said, “Good. From this day forth, you are the senior disciple of myself, Darknorth Daoist Ji Ning. I don’t have any requirements for my disciples, aside from one; not to be traitorous!”

“Your disciple understands,” Qi Xiaoyu said respectfully.

“Come with me.” Ning immediately walked towards a cabin on the second level of the ship. As he walked, he instructed, “Qi Rufeng, you can take your people into your cabins to rest. Aboard my ship, I shall

naturally see to your protection. You have nothing to worry about.”

Qi Xiaoyu obediently followed Ning to the second level.

As Ning was accepting his first disciple. Within a city that was hundreds of thousands of kilometers away. Within an enormous palace.

This palace was simply so vast that not even sunlight could penetrate into its depths. Within a dark, secluded courtyard, a tall, thin, red-skinned man dressed in black robes was frowning pensively in thought.

“Third brother.” Suddenly, a voice rang out. A similarly tall and skinny man, this one dressed in azure armor and with eyes like an incomparably savage hawk, came walking in.

“Seventh brother.” The black-robed man nodded lightly. “You came.”

“As the Flamewing King, you are living a carefree life of ease. Why have you summoned so many of us brothers?” The hawk-eyed, azure-armored man asked.

“Naturally, there is something good I want to share,” the Flamewing King said. “Seventh brother, you are the first to arrive, so I’ll let you know in advance. Do you know why I spent so much effort to annihilate the Qi Empire all those years back?”

The azure-armored, hawk-eyed man said, puzzled, “The destruction of the Qi Empire...didn’t you say that you felt your territory was too small, and that you wanted to take over a large area? Was that not the real reason? Can it be that it is as the legends claimed, that the Qi Emperor had a treasure trove? Hahaha...I don’t believe in such things. As far as we are concerned, not even the treasures left behind by Celestial Immortals can be considered a ‘treasure trove’.”

“There is indeed a treasure trove,” the Flamewing King said seriously.

“Oh?” The hawk-eyed man was startled.

“It was only because I learned of the imperial Qi clan’s huge treasure trove that I acted against them,” the Flamewing King said. “Through torture and soul-scouring and all other methods available to me, I learned

from the elder members of the imperial Qi clan...that the founding emperor of the Qi Empire had indeed encountered a treasure trove. However, he was too weak and so was only able to acquire a very small portion of the treasure trove, including some cultivation methods, divine abilities, and secret arts. But just by relying on this small portion, the Qi clan was able to rapidly rise to power, establish an empire, and then expand to the point where a few tens of thousands of years later, they had taken over a million kilometers of land."

The hawk-eyed man was quite startled to hear this.

"Over the past few tens of thousands of years, the imperial Qi clan has repeatedly ventured forth to the location of the treasure trove, but they were unable to make any progress," the Flamewing King said. "After I discovered the location of this treasure trove, I ventured there twice. The first time, I came back with nothing to show for my efforts. The second time, I made more ample preparations and forced my way deeper in...but I ended up being trapped within the place for more than twenty years. I nearly died there, and just barely managed to escape from it a short while ago!"

"What?!" The hawk-eyed man was completely shocked. He knew exactly how powerful this Flamewing King was. Of the major powers of the Star continent, the 'Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows' were extremely well-known. Each of them had unearthly amounts of power and extremely large territories. The Flamewing King was one of the 'Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows' and was extremely powerful. Otherwise, how could he have annihilated the Qi Empire?

"The place where this treasure trove is located is incomparably dangerous." The Flamewing King shook his head. "The treasures within the outermost perimeter of the trove have all been picked clean by the founding emperor of the Qi Empire...but those treasures aren't worth our attention anyhow. Deeper within are even more powerful treasures, and the ripples of those treasures...cause even my heart to tremble."

"Cause your heart to tremble?" The hawk-eyed man was intrigued as well.

"This treasure trove is incomparably mysterious, and I've always wanted to discover what it contains. But I'm unable to find out on my own; that's why I've asked all of our brothers to join forces with me. With us twelve kings combining our powers...I trust that we have a chance to go deeper into the treasure trove region," the Flamewing King said.

The hawk-eyed man nodded lightly as well.

Right as the two monster kings were chatting...a figure suddenly appeared in the distance, outside the courtyard. "Your Majesty, your subordinate has a report regarding the Flamewing Guard."

"Oh?" The Flamewing King glanced outside, then nodded. "Come in."

A tall, skinny old man with an extremely long neck and a furry face walked in. He glanced at the hawk-eyed man before speaking.

"Speak. There's nothing you need to hide from my seventh brother," the Flamewing King said.

"Understood." The long-necked elder said respectfully, "Your Majesty, you instructed us to pursue and kill the survivors of the imperial Qi clan. Only three of them remain, with the strongest being a Wanxiang Adept. However, just now, one of our ten-plus Flamewing Guard squads who were chasing after them was completely wiped out. Their jade life-tablets have all shattered. They died roughly six hundred thousand kilometers away from us..."

"Oh?" The Flamewing King frowned. That didn't make sense. This area was under the command of himself, the Flamewing King. All the monsters obeyed his orders, and the human cultivators had been shooed away by him long ago. Logically speaking...there should be no one in this region who would dare act against his Flamewing Guard.

"My guess is that the survivors of the imperial Qi clan..." The long-necked elder was about to venture a guess, but the Flamewing King interrupted him. With a frown, the Flamewing King barked, "Arrange for three companies of Flamewing Guards to head there and investigate. Can it be that the survivors of the imperial Qi clan have hidden secrets that even I am unaware of?"

"Yes," the long-necked elder said with respect, immediately accepting the order

.....

Soon, three companies of Flamewing Guards that were led by three Loose Immortal monsters teleported away from the royal capital of the Qi Empire and moved to investigate this affair.

# Chapter 19: Great Sinners

Viledragon River. A large boat was sailing through it with the currents.

Within a cabin on the large boat. The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, was currently alongside his two little sisters.

"By this point...all we can do is trust this senior Darknorth," Qi Rufeng sent mentally.

"Hmph." The violet-robed princess, Qi Ruhui, had a look of dissatisfaction in her eyes. "Although Xiaoyu was just one of our servants, she was surrounded by the light of great karmic virtue. Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals of major clans would fight for the chance of taking her on as a disciple. We actually let this Darknorth acquire her so easily; he didn't even have to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens! He took advantage of how downtrodden we are; back when our imperial clan was flourishing, we would've annihilated him for daring to toy with us in such a manner!"

"Little sister," the black-robed princess sent mentally, "That was then, this is now. We are now extremely weak, and senior Darknorth had even offered a hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked flying swords for her. This means that he isn't an unreasonable person. He hasn't abandoned us after taking her own as his disciple, and is continuing to hold fast to his promise to protect us. Given how weak we are right now, we should celebrate the fact that we've found someone who keeps his promises."

"Little sister, remember this: You are no longer a princess like you were before," Qi Rufeng mentally barked at her.

The youngest princess had been a child living in the palace back when the attack came; she had been spoiled absolutely rotten. Before the elders had a chance to teach and train her as she grew up, the entire nation had been destroyed. They had been fleeing this entire time, and nobody had a chance to teach her and see to her upbringing. Growing up in a state of constant flight, the hatred and grievances in her heart had grown increasingly strong. In fact, because the elders of the clan took good care

of Xiaoyu, she herself felt jealousy and dislike for Xiaoyu.

However, since Qi Xiaoyu was a person of great karmic virtue, the clan had ordered long ago that she could not be assaulted or killed. Otherwise...the princess probably would've arranged for Qi Xiaoyu's death long ago.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Suddenly, footsteps rang out on the stairs outside.

The crown prince and the two princesses looked out through the window towards the deck. They saw a white-robed maiden walking down from the second floor. The white-robed maiden was clearly different from other people, and a series of ripples could be sensed coming from the magic robes she wore.

"Qi Xiaoyu?"

The crown prince and princesses were greatly shocked.

Qi Xiaoyu, who had previously been in servant clothes, now looked completely different. Her robes were clearly extraordinary, and she had a silver bracelet around her arm. Her pure white arms were a perfect match for the bracelet, which made her skin look even paler. She now had a jade hairpin affixed in her hair which gave off mysterious, powerful ripples. As the saying goes, clothes make the man; Qi Xiaoyu was already a person of great karmic virtue who naturally made others feel positively towards her, and as an Immortal cultivator, her skin and her figure were superb. Beauty, poise, a wondrous aura...and now that she had changed clothes, she appeared even more dazzling than the two princesses.

"Those robes, that bracelet...they should be extremely rare top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasures. As for the jade hairpin...even I can't tell what it is!" Qi Rufeng said.

"Darknorth truly is an extraordinary figure. Although Mortal-ranked magic treasures aren't that precious, top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasures...they are still very rare." The black-robed princess sighed in amazement. "In addition, judging from the way in which senior Darknorth took out a hundred high-grade Heaven-ranked magic treasures earlier, he probably would've given her even better treasures, were it not

for the fact that she is still weak and can only use Mortal-ranked treasures. That jade hairpin...it should also be a top-grade Mortal-ranked treasure.”

The violet-robed princess disagreed. “It’s just a bunch of Mortal-ranked items.”

Qi Xiaoyu walked down the stairs, then knocked on the door to the cabin.

“Open the door,” the crown prince immediately instructed. One of the guards behind him immediately walked forward to push open the cabin door.

Qi Xiaoyu walked in, then immediately said, “Your Highness, Master wishes you to go to him.”

“In the future, there’s no need to refer to me as ‘your Highness’. You are now the exalted disciple of senior Darknorth; you can just refer to me by my name,” Crown Prince Qi Rufeng said.

But young princess Qi Ruhui said, “Xiaoyu, what sort of magic treasure is that hairpin? Neither my big brother nor my second sister can recognize it.”

“Master said that this is a protective treasure that can only be used once. Once the elemental ki within it is unleashed, it can withstand the attacks of even a supreme Loose Immortal for a space of ten breaths,” Qi Xiaoyu replied obediently.

“What?!” Everyone in the cabin was astonished. Block a supreme Loose Immortal’s attacks for the space of ten breaths? This was definitely a supremely valuable protective item.

In truth, this was just one of the many magic items left behind by Immortal Juhua. Ning felt that it was actually rather embarrassing for him to give out Mortal-ranked magic treasures to his first disciple; after all, she too was now a member of Mount Innerheart. Thus, he gave her this protective item.

“To block a supreme Loose Immortal...” The violet-robed princess

gritted her teeth. She couldn't help but feel jealous. "This shitty slave... she sure has some good luck."

Because they had been fleeing for so long, they had often used this sort of protective, anti-attack magic treasure. Over the course of tens of years, they had used them all up!

.....

Qi Rufeng hurriedly emerged from his cabin, climbing up the stairs to the second floor to go see Ji Ning.

"Greetings to you, senior Darknorth," Qi Rufeng said respectfully.

"Qi Rufeng, I have questions for you." Ning sat there, pointing towards a chair. "You can sit as well."

"Alright." Qi Rufeng immediately sat down obediently as directed. He was a person who knew when to advance and when to retreat. There was an enormous gap in power right now; he was completely unable to fight back against someone like Ning. Ning had given him a promise, and he had the feeling that this senior Darknorth was a decent person. If he had encountered a vicious, barbaric person, that sort of person would undoubtedly have had many ways to force him to hand over Qi Xiaoyu.

"I ask you this. Why is it that you have fled for so many years from the Flamewing King without successfully escaping?" Ning asked, puzzled, "Given how large this Star continent is, if you run a few million kilometers away, it will be easier for the Flamewing King to find a needle in the sea than to find you. And yet...you've been fleeing in such a haggard fashion for decades, and remain under pursuit."

Qi Rufeng shook his head and sighed. "This Flamewing King was originally a venomous pest of a type known as the 'flamewing bug' who cultivated the Dao. After he led his Diremonster army to suddenly attack my Qi Empire, the Flamewing King personally covered the entire imperial citadel with flamewing venom. The venom filled every single palace, and it instantly merged into the body of every single person it touched. There's no way to separate it from the bodies it has touched, and in fact it even has corrupted our souls. Even Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals

are unable to get rid of this poison.”

“Oh?” Ning was surprised. Flamewing bugs? He had never heard of this sort of venomous bug back in the Grand Xia world.

“This flamewing venom doesn’t actually harm the body or the soul.” Qi Rufeng shook his head, then said bitterly, “But no matter how far away we move away, the flamewing bugs can still sense the location of the flamewing venom. Even if we flee to the Cloud continent or the Flame continent, the flamewing bugs can still sense us. The Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals under the Flamewing King’s command can engage in teleportation and go to the Cloud continent and Flame continent...and so no matter where we flee to, we are unable to escape pursuit.”

Ning now understood. What a nasty poison! He still remembered how in his youth, when he was adventuring in Eastmount Marsh, he had been attacked and pursued by Ironwood Zhan. It was precisely because Ning had been touched by that ‘iceflower liquid’ that Ironwood Zhan was able to continue the chase, even though Ning had fled very far away.

However, by comparison this flamewing venom was even more formidable...and it was the Flamewing King who had personally used it. It was able to stain even the soul. Within this Crescent world, no matter where the clan fled to, the countless flamewing bugs under the king’s command would still be able to sense their direction.

“The majority of our imperial clan was killed on the spot, and the rest fled in every direction,” Qi Rufeng said. “Back then, Loose Immortals numbered amongst the fleeing survivors. However, no matter where we fled to, they continued to chase us. Thus, we chose to continue to flee about the former territory of our Qi Empire; after all, this was the place we originally controlled, and so we were quite familiar with it. In addition, the imperial clan had built up many secret bases...”

“After having fled for so long, we three are the only survivors.”

Qi Rufeng’s words were filled with grief and powerlessness.

Ning now understood it all.

The main problem was that the flamewing venom was hard to eradicate; thus, this crown prince and the princesses were constantly pursued. This sort of venom that stained even the soul...not even Ning was able to help get rid of it.

"I ask you this," Ning said. "How great a sinner is this Flamewing King? Is he surrounded by bloody sin light?"

"The Flamewing King is one of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows. He is famous for his savagery; naturally, the amount of sins he has committed towers to the skies. As far as the bloody aura of sin...from what I hear, all twelve of them are wreathed in tremendous amounts of bloody sin light. Anyone who uses divine sense to look at them will see a towering, tidal-wave of bloody sin light swirling around them. Even Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals will feel terrified upon seeing them," Qi Rufeng said.

Ning felt a sense of jubilation in his heart. A towering tidal-wave of bloody sin light? A huge sinner?

The trial to acquire the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was to kill ten great sinners and to accept a disciple. He had now accepted a disciple, and his next objective was to kill ten great sinners. Perhaps he would be able to fulfill the criteria by dealing with these twelve monster kings.

"You heard this personally, yes? You aren't just making this up?" Ning asked.

"Perhaps the stories are exaggerated, but they shouldn't be too exaggerated. The savagery of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows is known throughout the Star continent. In fact, even those in the Cloud continent and the Flame continent know about their reputation. Even supreme powers with Celestial Immortal Patriarchs are unwilling to go all out against these twelve monster kings," Qi Rufeng said. "Although my imperial Qi clan had originally fled to the Cloud continent, we were unfamiliar with the place and the people there. The fame of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows was simply too great; no one was willing to help us, and so in the end, we were chased all the way back

home. At least here within the former territory of our Qi Empire, we are able to struggle and fight for a period of time."

Ning felt startled. Even powers with Celestial Immortal Patriarchs were unwilling to fight with them?

"How strong are these twelve monster kings?" Ning asked. "How strong is the Flamewing King?"

"All twelve of them are incomparably savage and ferocious; the reason why they were willing to swear brotherhood was because they all had similar temperaments. Every one of them is incredibly powerful...but of course, some are stronger and some are weaker. The Flamewing King's power is average for the twelve; he has nearly a hundred Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals under his command. Given his power, killing ordinary Earth Immortals or Loose Immortals is as easy as killing a chicken," Qi Rufeng said.

"The strongest of the twelve, their number one figure, is the Goldfur Bearking. I've heard that the Goldfur Bearking has previously fought a Celestial Immortal Patriarch, who was unable to do anything to him. In the end, it was the Celestial Immortal who retreated. You tell me; is he powerful or not? When these twelve monster kings join forces, advancing and retreating in unison...they are one of the absolute hegemons of the entire Eastern Flows region. Although our Qi Empire previously spanned a million kilometers, we've never dared to encroach on their territory. Who would've thought that the Flamewing King would annihilate our empire?"

Ning was secretly startled. Even a Celestial Immortal had been unable to do anything, and had voluntarily retreated?

He had thought that he would be able to get his quota of ten great sinners from these twelve monster kings...but now, it seemed, things wouldn't be so easy!

"Easy is boring. Hard is interesting. I spent more than thirty years training at Mount Innerheart; I have yet to truly fight with anyone. The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows...a perfect foe!" Ning could

feel his blood beginning to pump excitedly through his veins, and his desire to do battle was growing...

# Chapter 20: The Slaughter on Viledragon River

Ji Ning stood there by himself on the prow of the ship, staring at the raging waves. He was in an excellent mood.

He had already found his disciple, and the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows would probably fulfill his quota of ten great sinners to kill. The only problem was...these monster kings were quite hard to deal with.

"Eh?" Ning suddenly stared towards the distant horizon. Atop the distant shore, a vague group of figures could be seen drawing closer and closer to them. They were moving at an extremely fast speed, and Ning could visibly make out the emblem of a flamewing on their Dao-armors.

"Flamewing Guards?" Ning laughed in surprise. "There's actually a few hundred of them."

Crown Prince Qi Rufeng and the others with him within the cabin stared outwards through the window towards the Viledragon River. They were seeking for a place to hide.

"Is that..." The crown prince's face changed dramatically.

"Hundreds of Flamewing Guards?!" The violet-robed Qi Ruhui's face instantly turned ashen. Twelve Flamewing Guards had already terrified them, but now hundreds more had come...even Loose Immortals would perish in a situation like this!

"Disastrous!" The crown prince's face was ashen. He frantically sent mentally, "It must be due to the fact that all twelve of those Flamewing Guards died, without a single one escaping. That's why they sent so many over this time."

In the past, during the flight of the imperial Qi clan, the Flamewing Guard had always held the upper hand. It was the imperial Qi clan which had continued to flee; the Flamewing Guard had never before had a situation where all their troops died in an encounter.

In addition, the crown prince, Qi Rufeng, was only recently the leader of their squad; in the past, they had Primal Daoists with them, and it was the clan elders who made the decisions. But now the Primal Daoists were all dead...and the decision-maker was Qi Rufeng!

Qi Rufeng was inexperienced. He had never before encountered a situation where all the chasing Flamewing Guard forces had been wiped out. He had no idea that the extermination of an entire squad would result in such a terrifying consequence.

“A total of three companies...each one led by a Loose Immortal or Earth Immortal, eleven Primal Diremonsters, and over a hundred Wanxiang Diremonsters.” The black-robed princess sent solemnly, “With so many Flamewing Guards in one place...even supreme Loose Immortals will most likely perish.”

“Why haven’t we fled?” The violet-robed princess sent frantically, “That Darknorth is merely a Primal Daoist. Even if he has a high level of comprehension of the Dao and can fight those at a higher level, he would at most be comparable to supreme Loose Immortals. In the face of this many Flamewing Guards, which number three Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal monsters amongst their ranks, there’s no way he can hold on.”

.....

Just as Ning was smiling...and the imperial Qi clan was utterly terrified...

The hundreds of distant Flamewing guards joined together into a grand Dao-soldier formation. The three companies were all led by Loose Immortals, who led their Primal Diremonsters and Wanxiang Diremonsters on the distant shore to join form into a a trio of three thousand meter tall flamewing bugs.

Blazing wings, and the body of a centipede.

The enormous three-headed flamewing bugs were filled with unearthly, savage power. Their auras alone caused the surrounding waves to instantly be crushed downwards and flattened.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The three massive flamewing bugs all flew into the river, running across the waves as they threw themselves towards Ning's ship.

Ning stood at the prow of the ship. He barked, "Hurry up and leave, and you can keep your lives."

"So you are the one protecting the imperial Qi clan." One of the three massive flamewing bugs spoke out in a growling voice. "Human, this is the territory of our Flamewing King. How dare you act so wildly here?"

"Don't waste words with him. Kill him."

"Kill the human."

Monsters and humans were enemies in virtually every part of the Three Realms. After all, these two races were the two most powerful races in the current Three Realms.

Ning shook his head gently. Three Loose Immortal monsters? They were most likely only on par with that Loose Immortal, Floatcloud, who had tried to assassinate him. Even all those years ago, he had been able to deal with Immortal Floatcloud. Now that his Primaltwin was a full level of power greater than it had been in the past, and now that his insights into the Dao of the Sword were unfathomably greater than before...killing these Loose Immortals would indeed be as easy as killing a chicken.

Accompanied by three massive waves, the three enormous flamewing bugs charged forward, seeking to attack Ning en-masse and annihilate him at one go.

Ning remained very calm. To deal with hundreds of Flamewing Guards, just by relying on his Dao Domain wouldn't be enough; he had to actually fight! But of course, it would still be very easy for him.

"Quick."

"Let's go."

"If we dawdle, we won't be able to escape."

The imperial Qi clan didn't dare to hesitate at all. If they did, they

would probably die here. As they saw it, no matter how high a level of comprehension Ning had, he was still just a Primal Daoist. In the face of three Loose Immortal monsters and hundreds of Flamewing Guards...it would be incredible if he was even able to block them.

“Let’s go.”

The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, waved his hand and a long shuttle once more appeared by the side of the large ship. Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The crown prince, the princesses, and the five servants all entered the shuttle.

“Go!” The violet-robed woman waved her hand, and instantly, a series of green bamboo strips flew out and descended from the skies, plunging into the roiling waves.

Swoosh!

The shuttle cruised through the waves, moving as fast as lightning. As for those green bamboo strips, there were hundreds of them, and they all stabbed downwards, completely surrounding the region where Ning and the three giant flamewing bugs were located. The bamboo strips even had bamboo leaves attached to them. The bamboo leaves floated about, causing the entire region to transform into nothingness. Even the surrounding waves had completely disappeared.

.....

“Little sister, you, you...!” Crown Prince Qi Rufeng, within the fleeing shuttle, was completely shocked.

The violet-robed princess turned her head to stare at the now-massive bamboo strips. She smirked disdainfully, “What is it? That Daoist Darknorth is merely a Primal Daoist; it’d be impressive if he even had the power of a supreme Loose Immortal. And even if he did, he still most likely isn’t a match for those Flamewing Guards. Since that was the case, we have to use him as best as we can and make him offer up his strength in service to our imperial clan. It can be said that this is the price he must pay for taking Xiaoyu away as his disciple.”

"You...are...AN IDIOT." Qi Rufeng was speechless with rage. "Given how powerful this Daoist Darknorth is, if he has a school or a master behind him, how are we supposed to deal with them?!"

"So what if he does? Who will learn of this?" The violet-robed princess remained disdainful.

The black-robed princess disagreed frantically. "Little sister, given this Daoist Darknorth's powerful, he probably has a Celestial Immortal Patriarch behind him. Celestial Immortals are able to investigate the past. When they find out..."

"Don't worry. So what if they do find out? Even if this Daoist Darknorth has a Celestial Immortal Patriarch backing him, there's no way that Celestial Immortal will find us. All that Celestial Immortal will know is that Daoist Darknorth was killed by the Flamewing Guard. Perhaps this might cause his school to go act against the Flamewing King!" A look of savagery was in the violet-robed princess's eyes. "Hmph. Hmph. Perhaps the Flamewing King will be killed as a result. Everything would be worth it!"

.....

Ning waved his hand, collecting his ship. Qi Xiaoyu, aboard the ship, was also collected into the Immortal estate he carried with him at all times.

"Hmph." Ning glanced at the fleeing imperial Qi clan. He watched as the treasures the youngest princess threw out, those bamboo slips, sank into the sea and formed a formation. He naturally understood what the plot was; to trap him here along with the Flamewing Guard. Otherwise... if so much as a single one of the three massive flamewing bugs moved to attack them, they would be in big trouble!

Now that they were all trapped in the formation, all three would undoubtedly join forces to attack him, Ji Ning. Only afterwards would they move to break the formation. This was a scheme to force Ning to fight with full power. And if Ning's level of power truly was what the imperial Qi clan believed it to be, then most likely the end result truly

would be as the princess predicted; he would be able to buy them some time, then die.

Unfortunately...their guess was wrong!

Ning's school was indeed powerful, far more so than they could imagine. Ning's master was Patriarch Subhuti, the creator of this entire world! And Ning's own level of power was far greater than they imagined as well!

"Kill him, then break the formation."

"Kill him."

The three massive flamewing bugs didn't panic at all. They had complete confidence in their ability to first kill this human, then break the formation. It would at most take them a bit of extra time, which didn't matter; those imperial Qi clansmen were all stained by flamewing venom, and they'd be able to find and catch them later.

"Die." Ning had an ugly look on his face. He was protecting them, but they had put a knife in his back. How could he not be enraged?

The enraged Ning no longer wished to waste any time; he was going to make the imperial Qi clan pay for what they did.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Ning stood there atop the water, Darknorth swords in his hands. He chopped out three times in a row with his sword-light!

Three streaks of blindingly bright sword-light transformed into three enormous black dragons. The power of the black dragons was utterly unearthly, and they smashed towards the three massive flamewings with utterly catastrophic power.

"What?!"

"How can this be?!"

"NO!"

The Loose Immortal monsters, Primal Diremonsters, and Wanxiang

Diremonsters within the three flamewing bugs were all stupefied. They were truly scared silly.

The three black dragons each flew to a different target. They had the shape of black dragons, but they were in reality streaks of incomparably terrifying sword-light. They chopped through the titanic flamewing bugs as easily as chopping through rotting wood. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The hundreds of monsters, including the Loose Immortal monsters, all perished!

Their souls were annihilated!

The enraged Ning's sword-blows were so powerful that they destroyed flesh and soul alike. In fact, even the Dao-armors worn by the Wanxiang Diremonsters were ground into dust, and quite a few of their magic treasures were shattered as well.

"BREAK!" Ning launched yet another streak of sword-light.

The surrounding formation was a one-use formation. It contained elemental ki and was primarily meant to trap foes. However, Ning couldn't be bothered to actually disrupt the formation; he just broke straight through it with a streak of howling sword-light, causing the bamboo talismans to instantly shatter.

Swoosh! Ning moved forward in pursuit.

.....

Within the shuttle which was escaping at lightning speed, the violet-robed princess had a look of madness in her eyes. "Hmph. Hmph. Perhaps the Flamewing King will be killed as a result. Everything would be worth it! Hahaha, I'm too clever. Earlier, I just wanted to make this Darknorth's death useful, to buy us some time. But now, it seems as though I, Qi Ruhui, just played a marvelous card."

"Yes. Quite the marvelous card." A cold voice rang out.

The crown prince and princesses suddenly shook. They turned their heads to look.

On the other end of the shuttle stood a fur-clad youth.

Ning looked at the three imperial Qi clansmen.

“How can this be...”

They were completely stupefied. They had escaped just moments ago and had said just a few words to each other. Almost no time had passed at all. They had no idea...that Ning would be able to kill hundreds of Flamewing Guards with a single exchange, then break through the formation and chase after them. Naturally, this had taken very little time.

“Senior Darknorth.” Qi Rufeng immediately rose to his feet.

Boom.

Ning’s gaze turned towards the violet-robed princess. Instantly, a streak of sword-light flew out...and the violet-robed princess was instantly ground into dust which flew everywhere. At Ning’s level...just the slightest bit of power was enough to shatter someone’s soul.

# Chapter 21: Bluecliff Xiaoyu

The crown prince, the second princess, and the servants aboard the shuttle all had ashen looks on their faces. They could all tell that this time, Darknorth was truly enraged!

They were all Immortal cultivators; naturally, they were no fools. They knew that the little princess had plotted against this senior Darknorth just now. Senior Darknorth had clearly gone to help them fight against the Flamewing Guard, but the little princess had stabbed him in the back...an action like this would be viewed with contempt by mortals and cultivators alike!

“Senior Darknorth...”

“Darknor...”

The crown princess and the second princess hurriedly spoke out, utterly terrified. This was completely not their fault. The little princess had acted completely of her own accord; they didn’t instruct her to carry out those actions at all! As for her death, the crown prince and the second princess felt a hint of regret but not too much pain. This was because far too many of their siblings had died on this journey, and all of their elders had perished as well. They were used to this sort of loss...and on an emotional level, the crown prince and the second princess were much closer.

Whoosh. Ning willed it, and a white-robed maiden appeared next to him. It was Qi Xiaoyu.

“Master,” Qi Xiaoyu said hurriedly, “I saw the little princess...” Halfway through her words, she realized that she was within the flying shuttle. Seeing the situation, she couldn’t help but grow confused.

“Disciple, watch carefully,” Ning said coldly.

“Yes,” Qi Xiaoyu said.

“Senior Darknorth, what happened just now was completely the actions of Ruhui; she wanted to use you to delay the Flamewing Guard,” Qi Rufeng said hurriedly.

"It was our little sister who carried out that action. Her alone," the black-robed princess said hurriedly as well.

Qi Xiaoyu just watched silently. When the Flamewing Guard had arrived, her master had gone to fight them while the imperial Qi clan had fled...and while fleeing, the little princess had thrown out a formation to trap them. Qi Xiaoyu had seen all of these things with perfect clarity. In addition, after having accompanied the imperial Qi clan for so long, Qi Xiaoyu knew very well how vicious and cruel the little princess was. Thus, by now she more or less knew what had happened!

Ning looked at the crown prince and the second princess. He said coldly, "I heard it all. There was talk of having the Celestial Immortal Patriarch behind me go take revenge upon the Flamewing King on my behalf and kill him? Hmph...I don't like to kill, but some people deserve killing!"

The crown prince and the second princess trembled.

"If the two of you were behind her actions, then you two shall both die as well. If you did not...I won't go so far as to implicate the two of you." Ning's gaze turned to the black-robed princess. He immediately used the [Soulcharmer Art] divine ability. Although this Black-White College art wasn't that strong, Ning's soul was far too powerful! The black-robed princess's gaze instantly turned dull.

"Speak. Did you have anything to do with the little princess' plot against me?" Ning asked calmly.

The black-robed princess spoke in a dull voice without any inflection at all. "It had nothing to do with me. Ruhui acted of her own volition. Although her action may have caused senior Darknorth to fight for a bit longer, it also created yet another powerful foe for our imperial Qi clan. If the school behind senior Darknorth came for vengeance, our imperial Qi clan would most likely be in even more dire straits. Ruhui was far too shortsighted..."

"...what just happened?" The black-robed princess regained her clarity of mind. She stared around in astonishment...and slowly, the memories of what had happened just now when she had been hypnotized came

rushing back to her. She couldn't help but look towards Ning in terror.

The crown prince's face instantly turned even more ashen.

"You." Ning looked towards the crown prince.

The crown prince gritted his teeth. "I definitely didn't have the intention to harm you, senior." Just as these words came out, Qi Rufeng's gaze also turned dull.

He, too, dully spoke out the truth. This truly did not have nothing to do with him.

The nearby Qi Xiaoyu let out a sigh of relief. She actually felt good-will towards the crown princess and the second princess.

"I ask you," Ning suddenly said, "Did your imperial Qi clan arrange for the destruction of Qi Xiaoyu's tribe?"

The black-robed princess's face instantly changed. Qi Xiaoyu's body trembled as well, and a look of terror and unease appeared in her eyes.

The crown prince responded in a wooden, robotic manner, "For the sake of ensuring Qi Xiaoyu's total devotion to our imperial clan, we had to make it so that she had no one else to rely on. Otherwise, in her heart, her tribe would still be occupy the most important position. Thus, the elders of the clan forced three Xiantian Diremonsters to attack the tribe. As for the two Xiantian experts of that tribe, our clan elders plotted against them and ensured that they naturally wouldn't be able to fight back, causing the entire tribe to be broken apart."

"Qi Xiaoyu's family members all died, giving her no one else to rely on. At that moment, our elder stepped in to protect her; naturally, she felt gratitude and affection for the elder's actions. Everything happened as we planned, and Qi Xiaoyu became incomparably devoted and loyal to our imperial Qi clan. In addition, after Qi Xiaoyu became a member of our imperial Qi clan, our luck took a noticeable turn for the better. The number of times we were attacked dropped, and the number of elders who died in each attack also lessened..."

"No...no..." Qi Xiaoyu's face was covered with tears. She repeatedly

shook her head.

Ning sighed mentally to himself. In truth, the main reason he had used the [Soulcharmer Art] was to ask about this matter. Given Ning's keen senses, he naturally noticed quite a few oddities regarding the destruction of Xiaoyu's tribe. It was extremely rare for this sort of large-scale tribe to suffer an attack from Diremonsters.

"As I thought." Ning nodded to himself. Qi Xiaoyu felt extremely deep gratitude towards the imperial Qi clan. Ning was afraid that this might cause problems in the future, and so he wanted to clarify this matter right away.

"You were plotting against me all along. All along..." Qi Xiaoyu looked at the crown prince, her face completely pale. "My master? Was she plotting against me as well?"

"Aunt-master Everlotus was opposed to our scheme. She wanted to go to your tribe and take you on as her disciple in a voluntary manner. However, our imperial Qi clan was in a state of flight; all of our actions had to be for the sake of the imperial Qi clan's best interests." The crown prince, Qi Rufeng, continued to speak in a monotone voice. "She felt sorry for you, and so when she took you on as disciple, taught you, and doted on you, it was out of love. In fact, some of the other princes and princesses felt jealousy for this."

Qi Xiaoyu felt her heart unclench slightly. The person she felt the most gratitude for in the entire imperial Qi clan was her master, Everlotus. Everlotus had taken care of her like she was her own daughter. She had loved her and cherished her. Qi Xiaoyu had been able to sense how much love Everlotus had felt for her, and ever since she was young, her master had taught her. Thus, although she didn't have many memories regarding life in the Bluecliff tribe and although she only had blurry memories of her parents, she felt an extremely deep affection for her master, Everlotus. After all, they had been together for the longest period of time.

Qi Xiaoyu was fairly accurate in sensing if others were kind or malicious towards her, if they cared about her or hated her. She had

always felt as though her master, Everlotus, had truly loved her. This was why she felt such gratitude for the imperial Qi clan. In fact, when the now-deceased leader of the imperial Qi clan had asked her to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens, she hadn't hesitated at all.

"What just happened?" Crown Prince Qi Rufeng came back to his senses. He quickly regained his memories, and his face immediately changed. He stared towards Ning in terror, then looked towards Qi Xiaoyu.

"Master Everlotus...I can understand why you did what you did. I don't blame you. I don't blame you..." Tears streaked down Qi Xiaoyu's face. She stared at the black-robed princess and the crown prince. Gritting her teeth, she said, "Your imperial Qi clan destroyed my tribe and home and killed my family. But Master Everlotus's benevolence towards me was as weighty as a mountain. From this day forth, I, Qi Xiaoyu, will no longer have any connection to your Qi clan. From this day forth, my name shall be Bluecliff Xiaoyu!"

"Master." Bluecliff Xiaoyu turned to look towards Ning, tears in her eyes. "Thank you, master, for enlightening me and not letting me continue to remain deceived. I wish to be by myself for a time."

"Go." Ning nodded, then willed Qi Xiaoyu to be teleported into his Immortal estate with a swish.

Ning's gaze turned towards the crown prince and the princess. Both of them felt helpless; when they had been hypnotized, they had thought it was just over the little princess' plot, but who would've thought that this senior Darknorth would actually uncover the matter of the destruction of the Bluecliff tribe? Still...by now, they had no options left. All they could do was beg for their lives.

"Since you had no intention to harm me, I naturally won't act against you. I will still hold to my promise," Ning said. "However...before I do so, come with me to a place."

As he spoke, Ning waved his hand, causing the imperial Qi clansmen and the flying shuttle to all be drawn into his Immortal estate. And then,

Ning strode forward across the waves of Viledragon River, quickly departing from this place.

.....

A short period of time later.

The peak of a tall mountain, surrounded by clouds. A ripple in space could be seen above it, then a fur-clad youth appeared out of nowhere and descended.

"This place works." The fur-clad youth nodded, then waved his hand. An Immortal estate appeared.

Within the Immortal estate. As Ning entered, the crown prince and the second princess both immediately paid their respects. The crown prince said, "Senior, where are we?"

"You can exit the estate now, but you had best not go too far. If you do, I won't be able to keep you alive," Ning said calmly. "This place is more than ten million kilometers from our previous location; I trust that the Flamewing King will need some time before chasing you here. Take a rest and prepare for the next battle."

"The next battle?" The two were startled.

"I killed hundreds of Flamewing guards, including three Loose Immortal monsters. Do you think that the Flamewing King is just going to shrug that off?" Ning said calmly.

The two shook their heads. Impossible. The Eastern Flows region was the territory of the twelve monster kings; given that this senior Darknorth had killed hundreds of Flamewing Guards, how could the Flamewing King not be enraged? It must be understood that the Flamewing Guards were the most devoted servants of the Flamewing King. Given that so many of them had perished, the Flamewing King would probably personally attack next time.

"The Flamewing King is coming in person." Both the crown prince and the second princess felt restless and uneasy. "And yet this senior Darknorth still intends to fight?"

"How powerful is he? Can it be that my earlier investigations were in error? He is more than just a peak Primal Daoist?"

Their hearts were in a state of panic. Still, given how quickly Ning had chased after him, he must have disposed of all of those Flamewing Guards...which meant that things probably truly were as Ning said. He had killed hundreds of Flamewing Guards.

"In such a short period of time, he killed hundreds of Flamewing Guards, broke the formation, then caught up to us. How powerful is this Ji Ning? Is it truly possible that he can fight the Flamewing King?" The crown prince and the princess both felt as though their thoughts were in a jumble.

.....

Ning couldn't be bothered to pay them any heed. He entered a private room within the Immortal estate. A ripple in space appeared within it and Ning stepped into the ripple, entering his underwater estate.

"I can't underestimate the Flamewing King's power. In fact, I might have to deal with the other monster kings as well. Before doing so...I need to increase my power a bit," Ning mused to himself. "My true body, when using [Three Heads, Six Arms], needs a total of six Immortal swords. Three of them are my Darknorth swords, and the other three would ideally be Immortal-ranked."

He had an exquisitely top-grade Thousandbull Sword, as well as a low-grade Immortal-ranked flying sword that the Grand Xia Emperor had bestowed upon him previously. Just now, when killing those three Loose Immortal monsters, he had further acquired two more low-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures, one of which was a flying sword.

"My true body needs to break through to the early Void stage as soon as possible. Only then can I better unleash the power of my Immortal-ranked magic treasures," Ning mused to himself. Those two low-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords were comparable to the Darknorth swords in power...what Ning really cared about was the Thousandbull Sword! That sword had close to the power of a Pure Yang treasure!

Ning immediately entered the Still Room within his underwater estate, then began to absorb liquefied elemental essence...

# Chapter 22: The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows

Roughly ten million kilometers away, in the imperial capital of the former Qi Empire. Within the imperial palace.

Within a lavishly decorated palace hall. Beautiful female attendants carried in platters of exquisite food and Immortal nectar, delivering them to the twelve tables, including the main table at the front of the hall.

“Come, drink.”

“Big brother, I toast you.”

“Ninth brother, it has been a thousand years since we met. Come, come, come; let us brothers have another cup together!”

Carefree laughter rang out. High-pitched, low-pitched, screeching... every single voice carried a dominating aura.

The monsters in the form of female attendants all felt their hearts tremble. They acted with the utmost caution, terrified of offending one of the monster kings. They knew that the twelve gathered here in this hall today were the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows; the likes of them could not risk offending any of these twelve. If they accidentally irritated one of the monster kings, the results would be disastrous.

One of the maidservants had, due to her nervousness, splattered some of the wine from her platter atop the Jadetoad King, one of the twelve monster kings. The Jadetoad King had rolled his eyes, opened his mouth, and devoured the maid servant into his belly.

In the center of the hall, there were beautiful human maidens and monsters who were engaging in dance. Naturally, there were also musicians who were beating the drums and playing the flute.

“Alright, all of you can leave for now.”

After a long time, the Flamewing King, seated in the host position at the front of the palace, ordered the servants to depart.

"Yes, your Majesty." The many servants, dancers, and musicians all immediately withdrew, leaving behind only the twelve monster kings within the hall.

"Third, you invited all of us brothers here today. Whatever important matter this is regarding, hurry up and speak." An extremely muscular monster king whose entire body was covered with golden fur and who had the head of a grizzly bear spoke out in a booming voice. This was the leader of the twelve monster kings, the Goldfur Bearking.

"Big brother." The tall, skinny, black-robed Flamewing King laughed, "Haha, I invited all of you here to take part in a joyous affair. Seventh brother came earlier, and so I've told him already. If you don't believe me, you can ask him."

The other monster kings all looked over to the azure-armored, hawk-eyed Skysoar King, who nodded. "This is indeed regarding a joyous affair."

"Oh?" The other monster kings all looked back towards the Flamewing King with curiosity. Although they were friends due to their similar temperaments, they were famous for their savagery. If they found anything good, they would usually keep it for themselves. Why would one of them now be willing to share with the rest of the brothers?

The Flamewing King, seeing their looks, smiled. He waved his hand and a black leather scroll flew out and unfurled in the air before them. On the leather scroll there was a complicated map, as well as a diagram.

"What is this?" The other monster kings were puzzled.

"The map to a treasure trove!" The Flamewing King said.

"Treasure trove?"

"A map to a treasure trove?"

"Are you joking? A 'treasure trove'? To the likes of us, even the treasures of a Celestial Immortal are nothing. The treasures of a True Immortal or an Empyrean God might barely qualify as a 'trove'."

All of the monster kings spoke out. They were the Twelve Monster

Kings of the Eastern Flows, who even Celestial Immortal Patriarchs were unwilling to offend. For them to acknowledge a collection of treasures as a ‘treasure trove’ was extremely hard.

The Skysoar King spoke out, “My fellow brothers, third brother hasn’t deceived you. The place marked by this map as having treasures can indeed...be described as a major treasure trove.”

“Oh?”

“A major treasure trove?” The other monster kings all began to ponder. For even their seventh brother, the Skysoar King, to acknowledge this place as being a treasure trove meant that there really might be something to this.

“Third brother, can it be that this has something to do with the Qi Empire?” The short, chubby, green-skinned Jadetoad King growled out.

The Flamewing King, seated at the head of the hall, nodded. “This does indeed have something to do with the Qi Empire. When I acted against them and destroyed them, it was because I heard some news regarding this treasure trove. I suddenly attacked without giving them any notice and seized a group of important figures of the imperial Qi clan. Then, I used soulscouring and other methods to learn more about the treasure trove, then acquired this treasure map from the imperial Qi clan as well.”

“Since you already have the treasure map, you can go by yourself, third brother.”

“I refuse to believe you are truly so generous, third brother.”

“Haha, third brother, what are you plotting? Speak up and be honest. Everyone here knows what type of person you are.”

All of them were renowned for their savagery; they knew what sort of individuals the other monster kings were.

The Flamewing King chortled. The nearby Skysoar King said, “Third brother did indeed go twice. The first time he went, he came back with nothing to show for it; he wasn’t able to go deep inside at all. The second time, he made more ample preparations and forced his way inside...but

was trapped within the region for twenty years, just barely surviving and coming back. He just escaped a short while ago.”

“What? Trapped for twenty years?”

“Third brother, you couldn’t even use a Greater Teleportation Dao-talisman to flee?”

“It was that dangerous?”

The monster kings were all astonished. The Flamewing King immediately said, “Listen to me describe in detail. This treasure trove region...”

The Flamewing King spoke nonstop regarding what he had experienced. He knew quite well that by relying on his own power, there was no way he would be able to make it any deeper; he had to have the rest of the twelve join him if he wanted to have any chances of success.

As the Flamewing King spoke, looks of astonishment and seriousness gradually began to appear on the faces of the other monster kings. This place was indeed both dangerous and terrifying...the Flamewing King’s descriptions alone indicated how mysterious and frightening this place was. Most likely, even Celestial Immortals who ventured there would perish.

“Only if the twelve of us join forces do we have any chance,” the Flamewing King said.

“What in the world is within this treasure trove?”

“I feel quite eager to find out.”

All of them felt tremendous desire towards this treasure trove.

The founding emperor of the Qi Empire had already scoured the outer perimeter of this treasure trove, and he had acquired Ki Refining Techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts from it. These techniques were all truly top-tier techniques; otherwise, the Qi Empire wouldn’t have been able to expand so rapidly. Given that the outer perimeter already possessed such incredible treasures...what did the depths of the trove

hold?!

"We have to plan this out carefully," the top-ranked Goldfur Bearking said solemnly. "We cannot be rash."

"Yes, we must make ample preparations."

"An extraordinary place."

Just as the monster kings were discussing and planning, a long-necked elder appeared at the entrance to the hall.

"Majesty, Majesty!" The long-necked elder called out repeatedly.

"Enter." The Flamewing King frowned.

The long-necked elder entered, then immediately said with respect, "Your Majesty, the three companies of Flamewing Guards led by those three Loose Immortals which we sent out...they all died. None of them escaped to make it back."

"They all died?" The Flamewing King suddenly jumped to his feet.

"Right. All of them." The long-necked elder nodded repeatedly, worry in his eyes.

The Flamewing King's face changed. Hundreds of Flamewing Guards, led by three Loose Immortals...how powerful was the enemy, to be able to wipe them out so cleanly and let none survive?

"What's wrong, third?"

"Third brother, what happened?"

The other monster kings began to query him. The Flamewing King responded solemnly, "To tell the truth, brothers...there are still a few survivors of the Qi Empire who are running around. However, the strongest of the imperial Qi clansmen is a mere Wanxiang Adept. One of my squads of Flamewing Guards found and attacked them, but the squad was wiped out. I felt this was strange, and so I sent three full companies to attack, but all of them were killed as well. None of them survived."

"Three full companies? Hundreds of Flamewing Guards in a Dao-soldier

formation...they would be able to wipe out even a supreme Loose Immortal."

"To kill hundreds of Flamewing Guards without letting even one escape...that is quite difficult."

"This is an extraordinary foe."

The monster kings knew each other's forces quite well; they knew how strong the Flamewing King's forces were.

"Hahaha, why worry about this matter? It is quite rare for all of us to be gathered in one place; let us pay a visit together, then, and see what the survivors of the imperial Qi clan have up their sleeves." The Goldfur Bearking let out a loud laugh. "When all of us join forces...there truly are few in the entire Star continent who are a match for us."

The supreme powers of the Star continent only held Celestial Immortal Patriarchs amongst their ranks. When the twelve joined forces, they truly did have nothing to fear from Celestial Immortals.

"Let us go together."

"Third brother, let's go take a look and see who has dared to antagonize the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows."

"Wiping out the Flamewing Guard...they gave you no face at all, third brother. Giving you no face is the same as giving all of us brothers no face."

"Let's go take a look together."

The Flamewing King immediately roared with laughter. "Hahaha, fine! With so many brothers here...it doesn't matter who is protecting the imperial Qi clan. That person will die!"

"Let's no waste time. We've already eaten and drunk our fill; let us go out and fight!"

"Let's go out and fight!"

The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows were decisive in their actions. They immediately led thousands of monsters in an awe-inspiring

wave from the imperial capital of the former Qi Empire.

.....

At the top of a mountain peak. Ning was seated next to a cliff. He was holding a gourd of wine in his hand, drinking in a leisurely manner while staring at the clouds and the sea. He had just consumed six hundred thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, causing his true body to break through as a Ki Refiner from the peak Primal level to the early Void level! He would now be able to more perfectly control his Immortal-ranked magic treasures.

"My true body can use the Thousandbull Sword, the Darknorth swords, and other magic treasures. My Primaltwin will use the [Heavenraker] sword formation." Ning nodded to himself. His power had reached the maximum level it could reach for now.

"Flamewing King, I killed hundreds of your Flamewing Guards...I imagine that you will personally come seek me out, right?"

Ning was waiting eagerly. Given that he was protecting the imperial Qi clan, the Flamewing King would definitely be lured over here!

"Ten major sinners. First I will kill the Flamewing King, and then I'll go deal with the others one by one," Ning murmured to himself. Given his current level of power, when his true body and his Primaltwin fought together, it shouldn't be too hard for him to kill a monster king.

As Ning was drinking and waiting leisurely by the cliffside, suddenly...

"Eh?" Ning suddenly stared into the distance. An enormous cloud was soaring towards his direction, and atop the cloud there was a dense cluster of countless figures. There were many monsters there, and in front of the countless monsters were twelve mighty figures whose auras filled the heavens, causing Ning's face to change.

"Twelve?" Ning's face couldn't help but blanche as he stared at the twelve figures standing in front of the countless monsters atop the massive cloud.

Such powerful auras...these were definitely no ordinary Loose

Immortals. The formless ripples of might caused even Ning to feel surprised. In addition, these twelve figures stood shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the countless monsters; clearly, there were no differences in rank here.

“Are you the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows?” Ning called out loudly, his voice echoing and filling the heavens.

“Little child, who are you? Is it your master who is protecting the imperial Qi clan?” The tall, thin, black-robed Flamewing King called out back, “Hurry up and have your master come out. We twelve brothers would like to see exactly who it is that has the audacity to annihilate hundreds of my Flamewing Guards with one breath.”

Ning cursed to himself with resignation. “All I wanted to do was fight against a single Flamewing King. Why the hell have all twelve shown up?! The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows all come from their own separate territories; why have they all gathered here today?”

# Chapter 23: Towering Amounts of Sin

The voices of both Ji Ning and the Flamewing King were very loud.

“Are you the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows?”

“...hurry up and have your master come out...”

Both voices echoed in the heavens, causing the surviving imperial Qi clansmen to feel shocked. They hurriedly moved to the entrance of the Immortal estate.

Crown Prince Qi Rufeng, Second Princess Qi Ruyu, Ning’s disciple Bluecliff Xiaoyu, and the imperial Qi servants all stared outwards past the gates of the Immortal estate. They saw Ning standing at the side of a cliff, wine-gourd in hand. Far away from him in the skies, there was a massive horde of countless monsters atop a cloud.

“Is that the Flamewing King?” Qi Rufeng’s face changed. He would never be able to forget that figure; that was his eternal nightmare.

But right now, the Flamewing King was just one of the twelve leading figures. “The Goldfur Bearking, the Snowfox King...there’s no doubting it. They are identical to the images of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows which the imperial Qi clan recorded down.” Qi Rufeng’s face was ashen. “All twelve of them have arrived.”

“They all arrived? Even though hundreds of Flamewing Guards were killed, why would all twelve of them come?!” The black-robed princess felt despair as well.

Although the two had Greater Teleportation Dao-seals, once they used them up, they would be gone. In addition, given the power of these monster kings, the monster kings could immediately teleport after them as well.

If the Flamewing King wanted to chase after them, he would definitely be able to. The reason why they had been able to flee and survive for so long was because the Flamewing King didn’t care too much about them; after acquiring the treasure map, the Flamewing King’s full attention was

on the treasure trove. He had only sent a few of his Flamewing Guards to deal with the imperial Qi clansmen.

"The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows?" Upon hearing these words, Bluecliff Xiaoyu's face changed as well. "Those twelve are the twelve monster kings?"

Xiaoyu stared at the twelve distant figures that commanded the countless monsters. Even at this great distance, the infinitely powerful aura emanated by the twelve caused her heart to tremble. She grew worried. "Master...I just took you on as my master. Don't die. Don't die!"

Now that she had severed all ties with the imperial Qi clan, she no longer had any friends or family in the world. Ning was her master, and thus the closest person she had left. She could tell that Ning viewed her kindly.

"I don't want Master to die. I don't want..." Xiaoyu was panicking inside. If her master died...she would be all alone.

Qi Rufeng's face was ashen. He shook his head in despair. "It's finished."

The black-robed princess shook her head as well. "All twelve of the monster kings have arrived. Even during our Qi Empire's most powerful era, they would have been able to wipe us out immediately. There is no way this senior Darknorth can withstand them. No way at all."

The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows were legends! Legends known throughout the Star continent, the Cloud continent, the Flame continent...

In short, within the Crescent world, these twelve monster kings were extremely famous. Most likely only Celestial Immortals would be able to flee and survive from them when they joined forces!

"Given the abilities these twelve monster kings have...even if senior Darknoth uses a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal, he still probably wouldn't be able to teleport away before being attacked," Qi Rufeng said as he trembled with despair.

Using Dao-seals took time. At the Celestial Immortal level, multiple techniques could be used in the blink of an eye.

Behind Ning, the imperial Qi clan was in a state of terrified despair, while Bluecliff Xiaoyu was praying ardently for his survival.

Ning stood there at the cliff. He quickly pondered as to how he should deal with these twelve monster kings while spreading out his divine sense in a wave to test them. And as he did...

"What fine fellows!" Ning was instantly shocked. The region with the twelve monster kings was completely filled with limitless amounts of bloody light. The bloody sin light surged and swelled like the waves of the sea, and the twisting waves of bloody sin light even formed illusions of ghosts who had died wrongful deaths.

"Wait. They aren't all like that." Ning took a careful look. "Eleven of these twelve monster kings are surrounded by hundreds of meters of bloody sin light. But...that monster king with the head of a golden-furred grizzly bear actually is only wreathed by a bit of corrosive black light?"

Indeed. The only one of the twelve not wrapped by the bloody aura of sin was actually the most famous of the twelve, the Goldfur Bearking. This caused Ning to feel extremely startled...and also even more wary. For this Goldfur Bearking to set up an alliance of twelve monster kings and be acknowledged as the most powerful amongst them, but possess the lowest amount of sin...one had to be wary of him.

"Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows," Ning called out loudly, "Per Master's orders, I am here protecting the imperial Qi clan. If you are wise, you shall immediately retreat. Otherwise, when Master returns, all of you shall perish!"

"Who is your master, exactly? Give us his name!" The Flamewing King barked from far away.

"He dares be so arrogant? The master of this Primal Daoist must be a powerful figure."

"With all of us brothers present, we wouldn't feel fear if even Celestial

Immortals came."

The monster kings silently sent mental messages to each other, trying to guess at who Ning's master was. They paid no attention to Ning himself; given their power, they could naturally tell that Ning was merely at the Primal Daoist level! A mere Primal Daoist...although they noticed through their divine sense sweep that his soul was fairly powerful, he was still merely a Primal Daoist!

As they saw it, there was no way a Primal Daoist could kill hundreds of Flamewing Guards without letting a single one escape!

"Brothers, watch from the sides for now," the Flamewing King said.

"Don't worry, third brother. If a Celestial Immortal Patriarch comes, we will intervene."

"Third brother, go and capture those imperial Qi clansmen."

The other monster kings all spoke out in support. A minor matter like capturing the imperial Qi clan wasn't something which required all twelve of the monster kings to join forces in carrying out.

.....

"Little child, hurry up and beat it," the Flameking King barked flatly. At the same time, he waved his arm, and with a whoosh, a massive fiery palm suddenly appeared above the mount peak. This massive fiery palm clawed towards the Immortal estate below it, terrifying the imperial Qi clansmen and Xiaoyu into fleeing into the estate.

"Come in." Ning willed it, and the Immortal estate instantly returned to his side.

"You dare interfere in my matters?" The Flamewing King was instantly enraged, and the massive fiery palm in the sky slammed towards Ning instead. "Since your master has not arrived, I shall take your life first and calm myself down a bit."

"You monster!" Ning pretended to be enraged. His body instantly transformed and became three hundred meters in size, and he also

executed the [Three Heads, Six Arms]. In his arms were the three Darknorth swords and three Heaven-ranked flying swords.

"I'll chop you down!" Ning's swords were like silken light as they chopped down wildly towards the massive fiery palm. The level of swordplay Ning was currently displaying was merely on the level he had displayed back during the Conclave, comparable to a supreme Loose Immortal.

Boom boom boom...with a series of massive exploding sounds, the massive fiery palm was completely destroyed, but part of the mountain peak was torn apart as well. The three-headed, six-armed Ning appeared to be quite angry as he said, "You monster, you actually dare to try to pick on me, your grandpa? If Master was here, you'd already be dead!"

"Ahahaha..."

"This human Primal Daoist is quite arrogant in the face of death."

"This human is pretty powerful. He's a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and was able to use [Heavenly Transformation] and [Three Heads, Six Arms]; he is indeed able to give Loose Immortals a fight. His swordplay is also at the level of a supreme Loose Immortal...he does indeed have a supreme Loose Immortal's combat potential."

"Right. Although he is a Primal Daoist, he does indeed have the power of a supreme Loose Immortal."

"Third brother, if you want to annihilate a supreme Loose Immortal at such a great distance just by controlling the natural elemental energy of the world...you'd need to do some more training first," another monster king teased.

Indeed. If the Flamewing King was to use magic treasures, it would naturally be very easy for him to kill a supreme Loose Immortal. But to annihilate a supreme Loose Immortal just by using a fiery palm formed from the natural elemental energy of the world? He was indeed not even close to being at that level yet.

"Hmph." The Flamewing King's face sank as he flew forward. Six fiery-

red scimitars suddenly appeared before him, each one carrying a powerful presence; clearly, all of them were Immortal-ranked magic treasures.

“Die, brat.” The Flamewing King was using his true power now.

“You monster!” Ning let out a roar, then moved forward like a giant Roc, flying at high speed towards the Flamewing King and seeking to engage him in close combat.

“This human is pretty powerful. His agility technique would be exceptional even amongst Loose Immortal monsters,” the Skysoar King evaluated.

“He does indeed have some potential. When he reaches the late Void level, he’ll probably be comparable to us.”

“Unfortunately, he’s going to die now.”

“Still, we need to be careful. His master might suddenly appear.”

The monster kings chatted amongst themselves lazily as they watched the battle.

The six scimitars of the Flamewing King formed into an enormous fiery serpent in mid-air. The fiery-red serpent was filled with unearthly savagery as it pounced towards the three-headed, six-armed Ning, who also flew forward to meet it.

Swish swish swish. The swords in Ning’s hands suddenly changed!

Previously, he was wielding three Darknorth swords and three Heaven-ranked flying swords. But suddenly, he put away his three Heaven-ranked flying swords and pulled out the Thousandbull Sword and two Immortal-ranked flying swords!

Riiip! The giant serpent of fire flashed like lightning, pouncing towards Ning. But what welcomed it was a terrifying sword blow!

Ning’s sword-light had transformed into a divine black dragon. The terrifying divine black dragon sword-light chopped through it like rotting wood, instantly breaking it apart and knocking the six scimitars aside.

“What?!” The Flamewing King was instantly shocked.

“Die.” Ning, who had previously appeared ‘enraged’, now let a hint of a killing intent flash through his eyes. With a swoosh, he reached the Flamewing King’s body.

Six streaks of sword-light simultaneously transformed into six divine black dragons, filling the world with their power.

“Quick, go save third brother!” The face of the Goldfur Bearking instantly changed.

“Not good!” The Skysoar King’s face changed as well.

“How can this...”

“His power...”

“This human...”

The monster kings had been watching from far away, ready to ward off a Celestial Immortal. None of them had expected that this clearly puny Primal Daoist would suddenly explode forth with such power! Ning’s aura increased explosively, and the power of his swordplay reached an extremely profound level as well.

Swish swish swish...the black dragon sword-light slashed forth with irresistible power.

“No...”

Engaged in close quarters, the Flamewing King had no chance to flee at all. In but an instant, Ning’s six streaks of sword-light completely surrounded the Flamewing King and killed him!

The surrounding area turned silent. The entire world seemed to freeze. The many monsters watching from far away were still in a state of amazement...but looks of seriousness appeared on the faces of the monster kings.

Ning stood there in midair. Waving his hand, he collected the magic treasures of the Flamewing King, a smile on his face. “I’m ashamed to say that I played a little trick on you just now. There was nothing I could do; the twelve of you are simply far too famous, and given that you have

dominated the Star continent for so many years, I imagine you definitely have a formation which is extremely well-suited to the twelve of you. That's why I had to kill one of you first."

# Chapter 24: The Sword as the Rake, the Heavens as the Field

The eleven remaining monster kings were so angry, their teeth hurt from gnashing. The reason they were so famous was naturally in part because they had developed a ‘Grand Soaring Bear Formation’ which was very well-suited to the twelve of them. The Goldfur Bearking was the heart of the formation, and the other eleven monster kings served to support him, transforming into a single massive flying bear. It was well-suited for both attack and defense, and in the face of it even Celestial Immortal Patriarchs would choose to flee. Once formed, even Ning fighting at full-strength would probably be forced to flee.

However...the Flamewing King was now dead. He had been responsible for the ‘central wing region’ of the formation; without him, there was naturally no way to execute the incomparably complicated and powerful ‘Grand Soaring Bear Formation’ to its full power.

“He tricked us.”

“Damn him.”

“How is this little human kid so powerful? I’ve never heard of someone like him in the Star, Cloud, or Flame continents.”

The monster kings really were tricked in a rather unfair manner. Only someone with the power of a Celestial Immortal would be able to kill the Flamewing King in an extremely short period of time! Those with the power of a Celestial Immortal generally were all quite famous. In addition, Ning had just recently reached the early Void stage; naturally, his level of insight wasn’t much higher than back when he was a Primal Daoist, and his elemental ki was three levels lower than that of the twelve monster kings, who were all comparable to the peak Void stage. All of the monsters had Immortal-ranked magic treasures as well!

The combination of all of these factors was what let Ning catch them off-guard with his successful sneak attack!

.....

"Hahaha, without the Flamewing King, I imagine you are now unable to form your formation. If you want to kill me...I'm afraid you won't be strong enough." Ning stood there in the air as he said leisurely, "I urge you to depart right away. In the future, you can at least term yourselves the Eleven Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows. However, if we truly were to fight each other...under the merciless exchange of blows between swords and sabers, you might end up the Nine Monster Kings or the Eight Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows."

"Damn it."

"Human, report your name!"

"Who in the world are you?"

The monster kings were utterly infuriated. Although they were very much on their guard now against Ning, none of them chose to leave. After all, he had just killed one of their brothers; if the remaining eleven fled without even choosing to fight, that would cause their reputations to be truly tarnished. For Loose Immortal monsters like them, given that the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations were growing increasingly powerful and that they would eventually die, their reputation was extremely important!"

Ning secretly felt resigned as well at their decision to stay. If the monster kings had chosen to leave, he would've secretly gone to their headquarters and slain them all, one by one.

"Listen up," Ning said with a laugh. "I am Immortal Darknorth, Ji Ning."

"Immortal Darknorth, Ji Ning?" The eleven monster kings all quietly memorized this name. As they did so, they continuously reflected on it, but no matter what, they couldn't recollect having heard of such a monstrously powerful genius on the Star, Cloud, or Flame continents who was known as Immortal Darknorth or who was known as Ji Ning."

"I made a promise to the survivors of the imperial Qi clan. I will hold to it and protect them," Ning said with a laugh. "I urge you all to leave."

The eleven monster kings stealthily sent messages to each other, but their decision had been made long ago. Leave? What a joke. Even if this was a Celestial Immortal Patriarch, they would still attack. One of their brothers had just died; how could they possibly choose to flee without even fighting?

“Assemble the formation!” The Goldfur Bearking ordered mentally.

Rumble...

Formless strands of glowing elemental ki sprang up around the bodies of the eleven monster kings. They used just a very rudimentary sort of combination technique, a technique that was similar to the [Netherwyrm Heavenlock Formation] in that it allowed them to pool and share their elemental ki! The elemental ki of eleven monster kings merged together... this allowed the power of their attacks to rise to a brand new level.

“Use all abilities you have to kill him,” the Goldfur Bearking sent mentally.

Whooooosh. Instantly, one Immortal-ranked magic treasure after another appeared in front of the eleven monster kings. As for the Goldfur Bearking, a total of ninety-nine pearl-type magic treasures appeared around him, each one with the aura of an Immortal-ranked magic item. Clearly, this was a set of items. As the leader of the twelve monster kings and the only one truly comparable to a Celestial Immortal, someone capable of forcing even Celestial Immortals to retreat, the Goldfur Bearking naturally had some truly extraordinary Immortal-ranked magic treasures.

Boom! As they joined into their formation, Ning charged forward as well.

“Kill!”

“Kill him.”

“Damn him.”

The eleven monster kings shared their elemental ki together, using all of their specialized techniques. After all, if they didn’t have a truly

supreme formation like the ‘Grand Soaring Bear Formation’, it was better to just share and pool their elemental ki as they used their own best techniques.

Streaks of light appeared in the skies. Enormous flaming phoenix wings that blazed for thirty thousand meters...a black deluge of water that surged towards Ning...boundless amounts of golden light that streaked and stabbed towards Ning...

.....

Both Ning and the eleven monster kings had a degree of insight into the Grand Dao of Qiankun. They all activated the power of the natural world, freezing the local space with the intention of binding their opponents, preventing them from teleporting away.

Of course, one could still use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to flee... but who would choose to flee at a time like this?

“The monster king died.”

“That human is actually this terrifyingly powerful.”

The vast horde of monsters that had been led here by the monster kings primarily consisted of the most talented and skilled monsters within the court of the Flamewing King! They numbered tens of Loose Immortals as well as many Primal Diremonsters and Wanxiang Diremonsters. However, even their king had been killed by this human youth in a single exchange; how would they possibly dare to charge forward?

And now, the other eleven monster kings were attacking the human youth together. A battle at this level was something which fodder like them would play no role in.

“The surrounding space has been locked. There’s no way to teleport.”

“It seems the monster kings aren’t willing to let the human escape. They insist on killing him.” As the monsters saw this, their eyes lit up. As they saw it, the eleven monster kings, when fighting in unison, would definitely have the upper hand. As to whether or not they would be able to kill this human...that was hard to say.

.....

The three-headed, six-armed Ning was three hundred meters tall, and his six swords were also three hundred meters long now. Whirling his six sharp swords, he sent sword-light criss-crossing across the sky, resisting the attacks of the eleven monster kings!

“Kill!” While blocking attacks, Ning continued to move closer and closer towards the monster kings. However, given that he was under heavy attack, how fast could he possibly move? The monster kings were able to easily pull away from Ning, and the pearl-type magic treasures of the Goldfur Bear King were particularly fierce. Every single pearl was like a miniature star that smashed down towards him with the weight of a massive mountain, causing Ning to feel very taxed when blocking them. Another monster king, the Mountback monster king, controlled a mountain-type magic treasure that smashed down with even greater power than the pearls. Fortunately, however, he only possessed a single such treasure.

The sword is an agile weapon. In the face of other attacks, Ning was able to deflect with a degree of ease, but he was at a disadvantage when faced with these heavy smashing blows.

“Hahaha, big brother, although this human has the power of a Celestial Immortal, you also have the power of a Celestial Immortal. Although the rest of us are a bit weaker, when we join forces we can completely suppress him. However...he is a Fiendgod Body Refiner with extremely powerful recuperative abilities. Still...that will only allow him to delay the inevitable.”

“If this continues, he will definitely die.”

“My brothers, be careful; don’t let him use a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal to escape.”

“Don’t worry, big brother; we are using many Immortal-ranked magic treasures to attack him. How can he possibly have the time to pull one out and activate it?”

The monster kings were filled with an aura of explosive might.

Ning was being assaulted by dozens of Immortal-ranked magic treasures, and every single wielder was an expert who was at least comparable to a Loose Immortal who had lived for five hundred thousand years. The Goldfur Bearking was comparable to a Loose Immortal who had lived for over a million years.

"Urgh." Ning was repeatedly struck by one of the pearls, causing him to vomit up blood.

"Quick."

"He's almost finished."

"Kill him."

The monster kings all directed their Immortal-ranked magic treasures to attack, wanting to seize this chance to slay Ning.

But right at this moment, Ning mused to himself mentally: "This should be the right moment."

Swish! Not too far away from Ning, another figure suddenly appeared out of nowhere. This was a black-robed Ji Ning who emanated an extremely powerful aura, the aura of a late Void-stage Earth Immortal. Behind him there was a sword sheath, and within the sword sheath were many Immortal swords that had been turned illusory and transient. The black-robed Ning pointed his finger, and instantly...swish swish swish!!! The nine seemingly-illusory black Immortal swords instantly flew out.

"Heavenraker!"

The black-robed Ning's eyes flashed with a cold light. Instantly, the nine translucent black flying swords instantly slashed through the skies, causing massive black scar to appear in the heavens.

Why was this technique known as [Heavenraker]?

This technique used the sword as the rake, and the heavens as the field. Mortals would use rakes and plows to tear through the fields, while Ning's sword-light was like a rake that would tear through the firmament like a field. Nine massive black scars instantly appeared in the skies,

stretching towards the monster kings and enveloping three of them.

“That’s a Primaltwin.”

“This human brat actually has a Primaltwin!”

“At the late Void-stage!”

The eleven monster kings were all shocked. As soon as Ning’s Primaltwin had emerged, it had immediately used [Heavenraker], a sword technique developed by a Daofather of the Great Firmament. In addition, he was using it with nine top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords, and ones that were specially designed to form into the [Heavenraker] sword formation at that! This technique was unquestionably Ning’s most powerful attack right now!

When Ning used the [Starseizing Hand], perhaps only the hand which wielded the Thousandbull Sword, a weapon almost comparable to Pure Yang treasures, would be able to unleash power which surpassed one of the nine swords in the [Heavenraker Sword Formation]. As for the combined attack of all nine swords? Even the Thousandbull Sword was a bit weaker.

“No!”

“Block it.”

“Hurry and block it!”

The other monster kings moved to help, and the three monster kings assaulted by the [Heavenraker] swords were completely focusing on blocking the technique, but...they were unable to!

A look of utter despair appeared in the eyes of the three monster kings.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! All three of them were instantly killed.

The [Heavenraker] formation of Ning’s Primaltwin was currently Ning’s most powerful technique. It was also incredibly fast; although the three monster kings knew that they wouldn’t be able to block it, there was no time at all for them to use Greater Teleportation Dao-seals to flee.

BOOM! Ning’s true body charged forward as well as his Primaltwin

once more launched the [Heavenraker] towards the other monster kings. The remaining monster kings instantly grew both panicked and frantic!

Ning, having fought with them earlier, already knew about the techniques they had available to them. As the saying went, know thyself and know thy foe; in doing so, you shall be victorious in all your battles. When his Primaltwin executed the [Heavenraker], he had focused on the weakest ones of the eleven! Naturally, he had been completely successful.

BOOM! Ning's true body exploded with full power as well. Previously, all six of Ning's Immortal swords were comparable in power because Ning was hiding the full might of the Thousandbull Sword. The enemies believed all six swords to be identical in power! But now that the real attack had begun, Ning naturally would no longer hide anything at all. He exploded forth with full power!

"KILL!"

The Thousandbull Sword was three hundred meters long, and as it chopped out, the illusion of an old black bull could be vaguely seen above the sword. The old black bull was emanating an utterly astonishing sword-ki, and as the sword itself struck out, it seemed to have transformed into an enormous divine black dragon.

In terms of single-target attacks, even the [Heavenraker] swords were inferior to this blow. The Jadetoad King was immediately heavily injured, and a second blow from Ning's Darknorth sword finished him off.

"Retreat!" The Goldfur Bearking gritted his teeth and howled angrily.

"Too late!" The reason why Ning had previously hid his power was for the sake of letting it all explode forth now. Holding nothing back at all, his Primaltwin and his true body both attacked at maximum force. The astonishingly fast strikes of his Primaltwin's [Heavenraker] swords tore jagged wounds into the skies, and the nine tears were like infinite chains that came to drag away the lives of the monster kings.

# Chapter 25: The Monster Kings Flee For Their Lives

“Quick, flee!”

“How is this human so powerful?”

The monster kings were terrified and gripped by despair. Of the group, only their boss, the Goldfur Bearking, was able to withstand Ji Ning’s attacks. The others were only able to buy themselves a bit of time, but Ning’s terrifying [Heavenraker] attacks and savage close-combat strikes would take their lives if they made even the slightest of mistakes.

Swoosh. A bloody streak of light flashed through the skies as the Redhate monster quickly fled.

“Time to go.” A gale arose, but six streaks of distorted sword-rifts appeared in the skies, surrounding that gale and slaughtering three of the monster kings who had been on the verge of fleeing.

.....

They had truly stumbled into a hornet’s nest. The Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows had never imagined that this human, this Immortal Darknorth, would have reached such a terrifying level of power. If they had been able to use the perfect, complete ‘Grand Soaring Bear Formation’, they definitely would’ve been able to suppress Ning...but Ning had plotted to kill the Flamewing King right off the start, causing them to only be able to fight individually.

Ning’s own level of power was simply too strong. Ning’s Primaltwin was at the late Void-stage and trained in the [Darknorth Sutra], a Ki Refining Technique developed by a Daofather of the Great Firmament. In terms of elemental ki, he had an amount that was comparable to the amount which Immortal Northwalker had previously possessed. In terms of sword-arts, he was comparable as well. But more importantly, Ning had a full set of nine top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords that were perfectly suited to the [Heavenraker] sword technique.

Thus, the power of Ning's Primaltwin was on a level higher than even Immortal Northwalker!

Ning's true body was a bit weaker, but the Thousandbull Sword was exceptionally ferocious. In addition, wounds were not a problem for his Fiendgod body, and slashes and stabs were of minor import. This caused the Loose Immortal monster kings to fear fighting Ning in close combat.

.....

Two Nings. One had incomparably powerful long range attacks that surpassed each of the monster kings in might. The other had a Fiendgod body that excelled in close combat.

Combined, the two utterly dominated these eleven monster kings that were unable to assemble into their standout formation, causing one after another to perish as they tried to flee.

"Immortal Darknorth." The Goldfur Bearking stood there in midair, his voice booming. "What sort of a grudge did you have against the twelve of us, for you to repeatedly plot against us in such a manner?"

By now, the Goldfur Bearking could tell that Ning had been scheming against them this entire time. Ning had first feigned weakness and had even lowered the power of the Thousandbull Sword, only to suddenly unleash it later on and kill three of the monster kings. The monster kings had immediately been thrown into a state of utter chaos. Each and every action of this Immortal Darknorth was clearly meant to result in the deaths of the twelve of them!

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Three figures disappeared into the horizons. Ning shook his head and sighed softly. "I was so careful, but I only killed eight of them." He only had a single main body and his Primaltwin, while his opponents were far more numerous. When they all moved to flee, they all began to use formidable agility techniques; naturally, Ning was unable to kill them all.

The Goldfur Bearking was so angry, he almost vomited blood. 'Only' killed eight of them?

“CHOP!” Ning’s gaze turned towards the distant Goldfur Bearking.

Whooooosh. Nine streaks of distorted sword-tears ripped through the skies, wrapping around the body of the massive Goldfur Bearking. The ninety-nine pearl-type magic treasures around the Goldfur Bearking, however, moved about in extremely profound ways as they joined together in three layers of defense. The defense was extremely tight and blocked off Ning’s sword-light attack.

“Don’t waste your energy. I’ve fought against more than ten Celestial Immortals, and none of them were able to do anything to me.” The Goldfur Bearking’s voice boomed out as he growled, “Tell me, why did you kill my brothers?”

“Brothers?” Ning shook his head. “Goldfur Bearking, all of the other monster kings were wreathed in enormous amounts of sin, and each of them were covered by more than three hundred meters of bloody sin light. You, however, have an extremely low amount of sin; you just have a bit of a corrosive black aura around you. You are completely different from them.”

The Goldfur Bearking nodded slowly. “Truth. You speak truth. They are too blind, too foolish, too insane. I am more clear-headed than them. In the face of the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, they were all gripped by despair and so no longer cared about incurring sin at all. But I know that the more sins one commits, the more powerful the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations are. I want to live longer; naturally, I won’t let large amounts of sin wrap around me.”

“But they were my subordinates, the subordinates I used to unify the Eastern flows region. You’ve destroyed everything.” The Goldfur Bearking growled, “I don’t wish to be enemies with you, but I want to understand things clearly. Why did you have to kill them?”

“Because of...” Ning said with a laugh, “Sin!”

The Goldfur Bearking suddenly understood. “Ah, I see. You wish to kill great sinners so as to accumulate more karmic merit. The more karmic merit you accrue, the easier it will be and the more help you will have

during your tribulation.”

“No.” Ning chuckled. “It is because of a test my master gave me.”

“Oh?” The Goldfur Bearking was puzzled.

“I must kill ten great sinners. This is my trial,” Ning said.

The Goldfur Bearking was speechless. “What...what school are you from? Why would you be given a trial like this? And...you are already so powerful. Who would dare give you a trial? Can it be that your master is a True Immortal or an Empyrean God?”

“You don’t need to worry about that. Let me ask you a question; compared to Celestial Immortals, how strong am I?” Ning asked. Since this Goldfur Bearking had fought with more than ten Celestial Immortals, he should be able to give an accurate assessment.

The Goldfur Bearking nodded. “You are a Sword Immortal. Your attacks are extremely powerful, especially those of your Primaltwin, which has reached the level of an average Celestial Immortal.”

“As for your true body, it is a bit weaker; it should be at the level of a weak Celestial Immortal. Still...your true body should have an extremely powerful Immortal-ranked flying sword which is clearly more formidable than the other five. Although you are ‘only’ at the level of a weak Celestial Immortal, you have the advantage of being a Fiendgod Body Refiner.”

“If the twelve of us had been able to form into the ‘Grand Soaring Bear Formation’, we would’ve been able to suppress you. Without it, however, you were able to break us down one by one and defeat us. The other eleven were comparatively weak and were not quite comparable to Celestial Immortals yet,” the Goldfur Bearking evaluated.

Loose Immortals were capable of living for a hundred thousand years, three hundred thousand years, five hundred thousand years, seven hundred thousand years, nine hundred thousand years, a million years...

The longer they survived, the greater their power became.

Back in the world of the Grand Xia, Immortal Floatcloud was merely a Loose Immortal at the hundred thousand year tier. These monster kings, however, were all at least at the five hundred thousand year tier. The Goldfur Bearking had surpassed the million-year tier, which was the level of Immortal Northwalker. As for Immortal Juhua, he had lived for millions of years.

“Oh.” Ning nodded, now having a rough estimation of his level of power.

“Immortal Darknorth, if there’s anything you need, you can come visit me at Goldtop Mountain.” After speaking, the Goldfur Bearking transformed into a streak of golden light and disappeared.

.....

Ning watched as the Goldfur Bearking left. He mused softly to himself, “The defense of that Goldfur Bearking was quite formidable. Those ninety-nine pearl-type treasures...the value of that entire set is definitely incalculable. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to acquire it.”

“Eh?” Having suddenly thought of something, Ning took a step back and returned to the cliff. The mountain was now a full level shorter than it had been in the past.

Ning waved his hand and an Immortal estate appeared. Bluecliff Xiaoyu and the imperial Qi clansmen emerged from the Immortal estate.

“What’s going on?” The imperial Qi clansmen stared around in terror.

“Did that Immortal Darknorth die, resulting in the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows acquiring his Immortal estate? Are we now in the hands of monsters?” The black-robed princess was terrified as well. Xiaoyu stared around with worry as well, searching for her master’s figure.

Suddenly...they were all transfixed by what they saw.

This was because they saw Ning seated next to the cliff, a gourd of wine in his hands. He was sipping it and staring towards the endless sea of clouds in the sky.

“Where are the monsters?” Qi Rufeng was awestruck.

“But, but...” The black-robed princess was stunned as well.

“Master, Master.” Xiaoyu ran over to Ning’s side. Amongst Immortal cultivators, masters and disciples had extremely close relationships. As the saying went, ‘one who is your master for a day should be revered as a parent for a lifetime’; this saying was no joke. After all, the benevolence shown by a master in transmitting the Dao was extremely great. Xiaoyu was very excited to discover that the seemingly young-looking youth was still alive and perfectly fine.

“Senior Darknorth, where are the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows?” Qi Rufeng didn’t dare believe that Ning had the power to defeat the twelve of them, and he couldn’t help but ask this question.

“Unfortunately, I only killed eight of them.” Ning shook his head and sighed.

“What?” Qi Rufeng’s eyes bulged out.

Ning paid him no attention. He continued to drink his wine and stare at the scenery. Although he was in quite a good mood, he still felt rather regretful. His trial for acquiring the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was to kill ten great sinners, but he had only killed eight! He was still missing two! If he had just killed two more of them, he would be able to go back to Mount Innerheart and learn the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] right away. Now, however, he would need to remain here for at least another short period of time and find two more great sinners to kill.

“Senior Darknorth...senior Dark...?” Qi Rufeng couldn’t help but call out repeatedly.

“Master.” Xiaoyu called out softly as well. At the same time, she couldn’t help but use her dainty little hand to gently touch Ning.

Ning turned to look at her. Xiaoyu’s face was full of questions. She whispered, “Master, you said you killed eight of them? But this...this...” She was a mere Zifu Disciple; the twelve monster kings were incomparably exalted figures in her eyes. The entirety of the Eastern

Flows were ruled by them. Her master had claimed to kill eight of them? He must've actually just killed eight ordinary Loose Immortal monsters, right?

"Look." Ning disdainfully waved his hand, and one Immortal-ranked magic treasure after another appeared in midair. These items had been left behind by the eight slain monster kings, and each of them emanated powerful ripples.

The eyes of Crown Prince Qi Rufeng, who had the most experience of the lot, instantly bulged out. He had seen Immortal-ranked magic treasures back in the imperial palace, which was why his eyes were bulging out right now. "These...these...these are all Immortal-ranked magic treasures? So many...how...what..."

"This set of Immortal-ranked treasures!" Qi Rufeng suddenly stared at six scimitars that hung in the skies. The six scimitars were the very same Immortal-ranked magic treasures which the Flamewing King had used long ago to slaughter a path through the Qi Empire. Qi Rufeng would never forget the scene of how one Loose Immortal after another fell in the face of those scimitars' wanton slaughter.

"This set belonged to the Flamewing King. He's dead now," Ning said calmly. "He was one of the eight I killed. I promised to protect you for a year, or until I killed the Flamewing King. I've accomplished my promise and I've done enough. You can go now."

Ning began to walk towards his Immortal estate, then instructed to Xiaoyu, "Xiaoyu, come with me."

"Y...yes master." Bluecliff Xiaoyu immediately followed Ning into the estate obediently.

As the two entered the Immortal estate, the Crown Prince and the princess simply stood there and stared at the estate for a long, long moment.

# Chapter 26: Success

The crown prince and the princess were indeed rather dazed. They could clearly see that the person before them was merely a Primal Daoist. For him to kill hundreds of Flamewing Guards was one thing, but how was it that he had killed eight of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows?

Although they hadn't personally witnessed it, the tens of Immortal-ranked magic treasures before them were real. They didn't believe that the Flamewing King and the other monster kings who had used these Immortal-ranked magic treasures to dominate the region would just voluntarily give them to senior Darknorth.

"Big brother, we must take on this senior Darknorth as our master. Once we miss this opportunity, we might never encounter someone like him again for the rest of our lives," the black-robed princess suddenly said.

"Right." The crown prince's eyes lit up as he nodded repeatedly. "Senior Darknorth is even more formidable than the twelve monster kings! He is far more powerful than our Qi Empire ever was."

The black-robed princess said solemnly, "The Flamewing King is now dead; the Flamewing Guards under his command were sent fleeing in panic. They know that we are under senior Darknorth's protection, and so the surviving ones definitely will not pursue us any longer. In the future, we will no longer need to flee."

The crown prince was startled for a moment, but then he nodded repeatedly with excitement. He hadn't seen the situation as clearly as his little sister.

"But the only two survivors of the imperial Qi clan are the two of us. How are supposed to grow stronger?" The black-robed princess said in a low voice, "The two of us, relying on our own efforts...we will probably never see the Qi Empire returned to its former glory again in our lifetimes. But by borrowing the strength of senior Darknorth, we would

still have hope."

"Right." Qi Rufeng nodded solemnly. "Let's go take him on as our master."

"We have to do so with sincerity. For someone as formidable as senior Darknorth...if he detects even a hint of insincerity, he will probably refuse," the black-robed princess warned.

The two siblings thus entered the Immortal estate as well.

Within a hall in the Immortal estate. Bluecliff Xiaoyu was seated there, watching as the two imperial siblings entered the estate.

"We wish to see senior Darknorth," Qi Rufeng said.

"Master is in seclusion right now. Wait a bit." Xiaoyu didn't shoo them away, because she knew that the only reason why the two were able to enter the Immortal estate was because Ning had permitted it. Ning was the master of this estate, after all; if he didn't wish to permit it, there was no way they would've been able to enter at all.

.....

The reason why Ning had let them enter was because he had discovered some interesting things.

"Eh?"

"A treasure trove?" Ning flipped through the maps in front of him. There were eight maps, all identical, and all pointing towards a treasure trove!

Although the eight slain monster kings were formidable, their storage-type magic treasures were all merely Heaven-ranked items. It was naturally quite easy for Ning to bind them. As he sorted through their items, he discovered to his surprise...that every single storage item contained a map of a treasure trove. All the maps were completely identical.

The treasure maps only had some simple markings atop them, such as 'Qi Empire', 'Riverfang Mountains', etc. This made it so that Ning knew

that the treasure map was originally created by the imperial Qi clan! This was the reason why Ning permitted the two imperial Qi clansmen to enter his estate.

"Each of the eight monster kings had a copy of this map, with the Flamewing King's copy being much older. The other seven should've been made through a ink-duplication technique." Ning frowned. "Right...I merely killed a few hundred of Flamewing Guards, but all twelve of the monster kings immediately attacked just a short while later. Logically speaking, the twelve of them should be scattered throughout the Eastern Flows; it would take them quite a bit of time just to spread the word to gather here. There can only be one explanation...when word of my slaughter of hundreds of Flamewing Guards made its way to the Flamewing King, the other monster kings were already present!"

"What sort of a situation would cause all twelve monster kings to gather together?"

Given that every single one of them had a copy of this treasure map... Ning had his answer. "They were most likely gathering for the sake of this treasure trove!"

Ning immediately began to search through the other items, paying especially close attention to the storage treasure of the Flamewing King. And indeed...although he didn't find anything in the other storage treasures, within the Flamewing King's items, Ning found an ancient book with golden parchment; clearly, it was designed to be able to withstand the passage of ages.

"The first time I ventured to the Riverfang Mountains, I was merely adventuring and entered by accident..."

"I am already a Void-level Earth Immortal; before my tribulation comes, I've decided to venture there once more, even though I know this place is very dangerous. I've only investigated a very small portion of this treasure trove; I trust that if I can acquire some more treasures, I will have a good chance of overcoming my Celestial Tribulation and becoming a Celestial Immortal."

“.....”

“Six Loose Immortals once more ventured to the Riverfang Mountains...”

“This time, we prepared many Dao-seals and treasures before venturing forth to the Riverfang Mountains...”

Ning flipped through the pages of the book. This was a legacy record passed down by the imperial Qi clan; it described the secrets of the Qi Empire's sudden rise to power. The founding emperor of the Qi Empire had acquired a portion of the benefits of the treasure trove and thus founded his empire. In just a few tens of thousands of years, the Qi Empire had grown to encompass an enormous territory and have quite a few Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals. Thus, the imperial Qi clan had naturally tried repeatedly to enter and investigate further. As they did, they had noted down the various dangers within the treasure trove.

They wanted to accumulate more experience and penetrate deeper within!

“A treasure trove?” Ning said softly in surprise, “Based on what this book describes, this treasure trove has Ki Refining Techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts...and is the reason why the Qi Empire was able to give birth to dozens of Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals within a short span of just a few tens of thousands of years. This is far more formidable than the Black-White College; I imagine that these techniques also vastly surpass the Black-White College's.”

“Mm. I need to go take a look.”

While at Mount Innerheart, Ning would often chat with his fellow disciples, and so he naturally knew quite a few things about this Crescent world. For example...he knew about the secrets of Viledragon River. He also knew the secrets of many other places.

Although Patriarch Subhuti had created the Crescent world, in truth, when Pangu's Primordial World had shattered, Patriarch Subhuti had used a powerful divine ability to teleport some of the shattered portions of the Primordial World to his own Crescent world. In addition, when Patriarch Subhuti wanted to test something or create something new,

his experiments would be carried out here on the Crescent world! This was because this world was his territory; the secrets here would never be released to outsiders.

"From what my senior fellow disciples told me...within this Crescent world are some remnant parts of the ancient Pangu's Primordial World, as well as some of the treasures left behind by that cataclysmic war." Ning instantly felt a hot eagerness rise in his heart. Very few knew this secret, and almost all who did were the personal disciples of the Old Patriarch. Thus, they would often go roving and exploring within the Crescent world.

"But after the Old Patriarch sealed off these places with vestigial powers left behind by the cataclysmic war that ended Pangu's Primordial World...if one doesn't visit the places in person, it would be very hard to locate the places from afar."

"Now, it seems...this treasure trove is one of those special places."

Ning felt quite certain. This was because the book stated that the deepest ripples within the treasure trove caused the Loose Immortals of the Qi Empire to tremble with terror. It must be understood that Loose Immortals were capable of suppressing and binding Immortal-ranked magic treasures, and sometimes even capable of suppressing Pure Yang treasures. A treasure that could cause them to feel terror? Could it be the corpse of a major power from the Primordial Era? A weapon? A grand formation? Or was it some other oddity?

"I need to go take a look." Ning immediately made up his mind to go take a look. Since destiny had come knocking, why hesitate?

The crown prince and the princess waited for Ning for a long time. Finally, Ning came out.

Ning asked questions them regarding the treasure trove. The second princess knew nothing of this matter, while Crown Prince Qi Rufeng hemmed and hawed, not wanting to reveal the biggest secret of their imperial Qi clan. However, by the time Ning spoke of the Riverfang Mountains...the crown prince felt regret for his hesitation. Only now did

he hurriedly reveal everything.

"You can leave now." This was the last thing Ning said to them.

The crown prince and the princess both fell to their knees, wanting to beg Ning to take them on as disciples. But Ning's response was very simple; he teleported them outside the Immortal estate, and then caused the entire Immortal estate to vanish into thin air.

The crown prince, the princess, and their servants stood there in a daze, atop the half-shattered mountain peak. The mountain wind blew through their hair, causing them to feel despair.

"The opportunity was right there in front of me. Why didn't I tell him? It's just a treasure trove! Senior Darknorth already knew about it; he must've been considering taking us on as disciples, and just wanted to give us a test. But I didn't tell him! Damn me!" Crown Prince Qi Rufeng was utterly tormented by regret.

But he had no idea that even if he had been honest, Ning still wouldn't have taken him on as a disciple.

How could one accept disciples in such a casual manner?

.....

Ning didn't immediately hurry to the treasure trove area in the Riverfang Mountains. Instead, he went to search for those two other great sinners.

He first went to search for the three surviving monster kings of the Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows who had fled. Unfortunately... the only one Ning found was the fourth, the 'Venomspike King'. The Venomspike King was drinking unhappily in his palace with a belly full of anger and unhappiness. He was toying with a beautiful, fox-like maiden in his arms as he drank.

When Ning appeared, the Venomspike King was so terrified that he wanted to immediately flee...but how could Ning give him the opportunity to do so?

“How the hell did I piss you off?!” The Venomspike King was only able to let out one final enraged bellow before being killed by Ning.

.....

Ning then spent more than half a month before finally finding a Loose Immortal within a school whose evil reputation was widespread. This was a human Loose Immortal, and the most powerful expert of his school! This was an old fellow who had lived for six hundred thousand years. His school was an evil one, and so Ning immediately went to uproot this vile base!

He first slaughtered three Loose Immortals who charged towards him, causing the old fellow to appear at last. As the many disciples of the school watched with anticipation...their ‘infinitely powerful’ and savage Patriarch battled against Ning for a period of time, then was pincered and slain by Ning’s true body and Primaltwin!

“What a fellow. His power was close to the Goldfur Bearking’s; only, his defense was a bit weaker.” Ning had enjoyed this battle quite a bit. He had also acquired two more Immortal-ranked magic treasures from the old fellow, one a high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure, one a top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

This was the most powerful person Ning had slain.

“Wonderful, wonderful.”

“I’ve killed so many formidable Loose Immortals, all of whom were surrounded by vicious, baleful auras. My three Darknorth swords are now comparable to high-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords now.” Ning felt quite delighted; killing ordinary Loose Immortals didn’t do much, but the nine monster kings and that wicked Patriarch released an absolutely astonishing amount of baleful energy when slain. The wicked Patriarch in particular; his baleful aura was comparable to four or five of the monster kings combined!

“If I kill ten more figures like that wicked Patriarch, I imagine that my Darknorth swords will be comparable to top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords.” This was Ning’s estimation.

.....

He had successfully taken on a disciple. He had also killed ten great sinners. Now, Ning led his disciple, Bluecliff Xiaoyu, to the Riverfang Mountains.

"So these are the Riverfang Mountains?" Ning stared towards the distance. The mountains here stretched out past the horizon and were perpetually shrouded by fog and clouds. From Ning's vantage point, these mountains did indeed look like a series of sharp fangs that were jutting towards the skies.

# Chapter 27: Riverfang Mountains

As Ji Ning stared at the distant Riverfang Mountains, he couldn't help but feel his heart skip a beat. He could vaguely sense an incomparably terrifying threat that lay coiled deep within the mountains.

"At my current level of power...there are very few people in the entire Crescent world who can pose a threat to me. The ones who are more powerful than me have almost all been recruited into Mount Innerheart; when they see me, they might even have to address me as 'uncle-master'. Even the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods would be my fellow disciples," Ning mused to himself.

Roaming within the Crescent world should be like roaming within his own family garden. This was the very first time he felt a thrill of fear!

"It seems there really is some danger here, enough danger to threaten me." Ning nodded lightly. "Mm. If the situation looks bad, I'll immediately hide in the underwater estate. Later, I'll ask Master to help me escape back to Mount Innerheart."

When trapped in dire circumstances, ask for Master's aid. Although this was a bit shameless, Ning was within the Crescent world, after all; his master couldn't be too strict with him. In addition, after he truly left the Crescent world, Ning wouldn't even be able to mention his master's name; he'd have to rely on himself for everything.

"Master?" The nearby Bluecliff Xiaoyu called out softly.

Ning glanced sideways at his disciple, then said with a laugh, "Xiaoyu, I am going into the mountains to take a look. These mountains are very dangerous; go into the Immortal estate first."

"Yes, Master," Xiaoyu said obediently.

Ning waved his arm, immediately drawing Xiaoyu into his Immortal estate. And then, by himself, Ning transformed into a streak of light that flew straight into the Riverfang Mountains.

.....

Ning had acquired the detailed records produced by successive generations of Qi Empire experts. He soon reached the outer perimeter of the treasure trove.

"Eh?" As he strode through the mountains, Ning felt a strange sensation coming to him through the earth.

"Kill...kill...kill..."

He could vaguely sense as though an invisible howl was being transmitted from far away through the dirt, as though an unfathomably long period of time ago, an enormous battle had occurred in this place. Even now, after so many years had passed, the murderous intent from that battle remained unabated.

"The earth here is different from the ordinary earth found elsewhere in the Crescent world. It's clearly much heavier, and the earth's aura in this region is significantly denser as well." Ning nodded lightly. "This might truly be a tiny remnant of Pangu's shattered Primordial World which was teleported here."

With the aid of the tests the imperial Qi clan had carried out, Ning quickly found a mountain valley and began to walk through it. The clouds and the mists coiled about here, making it so that even Ning was only able to see to one or two kilometers. As for divine sense? What his divine sense found was completely different from what his physical eyes could see. This was because....

"My divine sense has been completely fooled. Everything my divine sense is showing me is false." Ning even stretched his hand out to touch a place, ascertaining that his eyes weren't being deceived as well!

He carefully advanced.

Far away, up ahead, he saw an enormous ravine. Ning could sense a terrifyingly sharp saber-intent radiating from that ravine.

"Apparently, although this ravine looks as though it was naturally formed, it was actually carved out through saber-ki." Ning walked forward for the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea. Suddenly, he felt an

invisible pressure envelop him.

"This is the same as what was recorded within the Qi Empire's book. According to the book, the deeper one goes in, the greater the pressure shall become. The experts of the various generations of the Qi Empire were all ultimately forced to give up by this pressure and return. The pathway I'm walking through right now should be the pathway with the least amount of pressure." Ning quickly advanced. As he did, the strength of the pressure rose dramatically.

When Ning had first entered this region, five thousand kilograms of pressure was evenly being applied to his body. But now, it had already reached five hundred thousand kilograms...fifty million kilograms...

Rumble...

A powerful repulsive force collided against Ning's body, causing a series of rumbling sounds. The amount of pressure pushing down against Ning was now comparable to a series of massive mountains that were smashing down repeatedly towards him!

"Even most Loose Immortals wouldn't be able to withstand this amount of pressure." Ning waved his hand, and the Thousandbull Sword appeared within it. Brandishing the Thousandbull Sword, Ning caused a divine black dragon to suddenly howl forth, striking against the pressure that was crushing down against Ning and lessening it.

"Pretty easy." Ning continued to advance forward while using the Thousandbull Sword to chop apart the invisible pressure.

Clearly, this sort of invisible pressure was born from some sort of ancient, powerful restrictive formation; it sent pulses of pressure out to attack. Loose Immortals were generally Ki Refiners with very weak bodies; thus, if they wanted to advance, they would have to rely on their magic treasures to break apart the pulses of pressure. Previously, Ning had been relying on his Fiendgod Body and so didn't need to use any magic treasures to make it to this point.

Whoosh. Yet another divine black dragon howled forth, leaving behind a dazzling arc in the mist and blasting apart yet another pulse of

pressure.

After walking for another period of time.

“Change!” Ning suddenly transformed into his three-headed, six-armed form. Five more Immortal swords appeared in his hands, all of them the illusory black Heavenraker swords. In such a dangerous region, Ning was unwilling to let his Primaltwin appear. Thus, his true body would temporarily use the Heavenraker swords; after all, the power of top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords was very great.

With six top-grade Immortal-ranked swords in his hands, as well as the [Three Heads, Six Arms] divine ability, Ning once more found it easy to advance through the region.

The amount of divine power [Three Heads, Six Arms] used up was more than ten times less than the amount the [Starseizing Hand] used up.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh...

Six divine black dragons howled forth, blasting apart one pulse of pressure after another. However, some remnant pulses still made their way through and struck Ning, causing explosive sounds when they did! Ning, however, was a Fiendgod Body Refiner; so long as the remnant pressures didn’t contain too much power, he would be fine.

“This place is a place the imperial Qi clansmen have never reached.”

After walking for another period of time, Ning realized that even with six Immortal swords, he was beginning to feel a bit taxed. Right at this moment, Ning saw a figure off in the distance. The figure saw Ning as well.

“Immortal Darknorth.” A booming voice rang out.

“Goldfur Bearking.” Ning spoke out. The man before him was the tall, muscular Goldfur Bearking. Around him were those ninety-nine pearls that were circling and swirling as they broke apart the pulses of pressure.

“Immortal Darknorth, you acquired a treasure map and discovered this place?” The Goldfur Bearking said.

"Just so." Ning didn't deny it.

"Originally, the twelve of us were planning to enter these Riverfang Mountains. We were discussing this matter with our third brother, but when we received word that hundreds of his Flamewing Guards had been slain, all of us immediately followed him to your place to provide support...but who would've thought that most of the others would die, and that today I would be the only person to come to this treasure trove? Oh, and you, Immortal Darknorth, the slayer of so many monster kings... you came as well. Truly, anything can happen in this world!" The Goldfur Bearking sighed.

Ning laughed. "I do indeed need to thank the Flamewing King. Otherwise, how could I have learned about this treasure trove? Still...why have you come to a halt here? Are you unable to move any further?"

There was something quite strange about this region. If one advanced, no matter towards which direction, one would feel tremendous amounts of pressure crashing down upon one's body. However, if one didn't move at all, one wouldn't suffer the pressure.

"Right, I can't move any further! You have a Fiendgod body, and so you can endure the remnant repulsive force when it strikes you. Loose Immortals Ki Refiners like myself, however, don't dare to fight head on in such a manner. We need to completely dissipate all of the terrifying pressure, which requires an enormous amount of elemental ki to be used up. I need to first restore more of my elemental ki before I go in any further," the Goldfur Bearking said.

"Then I'll take my leave for now," Ning said with a chuckle. Six top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords in his hands, Ning once more began to force his way forward, quickly disappearing from the Goldfur Bearking's field of vision.

"The preparations we made all ended up benefiting this Immortal Darknorth." 1 The Goldfur Bearking gritted his teeth, but he felt quite helpless. He knew that Ning was more powerful than he was, and as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ning had a better chance of survival in a place

like this.

.....

"[Starseizing Hand]!"

Ning was finally forced by the pressure to use his [Starseizing Hand].

Instantly, the power of the divine black dragons of sword-light increased dramatically. In fact, Ning even temporarily cancelled his [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique. Just by relying on the Thousandbull Sword and the [Starseizing Hand], he carved a path forward!

Charge! Charge! Charge!

But gradually, Ning was once again pressured to the point of being forced to use [Three Heads, Six Arms]. All six arms were now using the [Starseizing Hand]. After a long period of time, Ning was even forced to take a break, so as to recover his largely depleted divine power.

.....

Occasional breaks, followed by occasional advances. Towards the end, Ning would have to use six strikes of the [Starseizing Hand] for every thirty meters he travelled. One could imagine how quickly his divine power was being used up!

Rumble...

As Ning took one more step forward...he actually broke through and out of the pressure region.

"Hahahaha."

"I finally escaped that damn place."

Ning laughed loudly. There were no more ripples of pressure in this location. For the first time in his life...Ning felt as though walking forward normally was actually quite an enjoyable thing.

"I spent nearly a full day walking a mere several thousand kilometers, and I used up all of my divine power several times." Ning shook his head and sighed. Still, he continued to advance with all six Immortal swords at

the ready. He tried to use his divine sense to scout ahead, but unfortunately, his divine sense remained deceived, as everything it was telling him was clearly false.

Ning walked forward, following a winding creek. Fog and mist continued to swirl around the region, causing him to only be able to see to a distance of one or two kilometers, where he could vaguely make out a gorge.

CRA-KOW! Just as Ning took a step forward, a bolt of lightning suddenly descended out of nowhere.

“Beat it!” Ning didn’t hesitate at all as he immediately swung out all six swords with full force. Six divine black dragons of sword-light hwoled forward, shattering that bolt of lightning.

Crackle crackle crackle...a large amount of lightning and thunder began to swell forward towards him.

“Previously it was invisible pressure...but at least that wasn’t lethal. But this lightning is.” Ning hurriedly used his swordplay to defend. He noticed that so long as he retreated, the number of attacking thunderbolts would lessen. When he advanced, however, the attacking thunderbolts would increase at an astonishing rate, growing increasingly savage and increasingly powerful.

Ning was only able to advance three hundred meters before being forced to come to a halt, unable to advance any further.

Rumble....

The bolts of lightning were now as thick as a water barrel. They wildly flooded towards and hammered down upon Ning, who struggled to block them. He tried to take a single step forward, but the increasingly frenetic thunderbolts instantly pushed him backwards.

“What should I do? I can’t advance at all.” Ning was worried now. The attacks were simply too powerful.

Ning had tested letting a small amount of the lightning strike him, and his divine body had easily deflected it. However, as he continued to test it,

he realized that there was a limit to how many thunderbolts his divine body could endure. He had to use his sword-light to break apart the rest!

The only reason he had made it as far as he did was because of his Fiendgod-like body.

"Am I going to have to go back? Going back is easy, as the number of lightning bolts will lessen as I retreat. As for the pressure zone, I'll only need around half a day or so to move through it and slowly escape." Ning didn't have any problems with leaving, unlike some; according to the imperial Qi records, there had been Loose Immortals who had used special methods to force a path forward, but after making it too far in, they were unable to escape. This was because when leaving, they still had to go through the pressure zone once more. They eventually had to spend countless years retreating, one step at a time.

What Ning didn't realize was that the Flamewing King had been trapped within the pressure zone for tens of years!

Rumble...

Countless bolts of lightning continued to slam down frantically.

Ning truly didn't want to give up.

"Kiddo, you came in at such a low level of power? I urge you to hurry up and leave. Don't lose your life here!" A shrill voice suddenly rang out within Ning's ears.

\*

1. In the original Chinese, the saying was 'made wedding clothes for him'; this is a classic saying about how you put in a tremendous amount of work, only for someone else to reap the benefits.

# Chapter 28: Returning to Mount Innerheart

There was someone else here?

Ji Ning was startled. He hurriedly retreated several meters, causing the striking lightning bolts to weaken slightly. Only now did he dare divide his attention to look around carefully.

“Eh?” Ning frowned. From the crevices between the bolts of lightning that continued to hammer towards him, Ning saw a black-robed youth was standing far away at the entrance to the distant gorge.

Swoosh! Ning hurriedly retreated, leaving from the thunder field region. All of the lightning bolts vanished, allowing Ning to clearly see the figure at the entrance to the gorge. The black-robed youth was similar to Mu Northson in height, and even skinnier than Ning himself. However, Ning could sense that this black-robed youth had been alive for a long, long time.

The black-robed youth’s gaze was both sharp and terrifying. His face was expressionless; he was most likely the type that was born arrogant and aloof.

“Who are you?” Ning asked.

“Me?” The black-robed youth’s voice was shrill. He looked thoughtfully towards Ning. “Even if I told you my name, kid, you wouldn’t recognize it. You should be at the early Void stage, but you actually broke through the first forbidden zone, and were even able to advance three hundred meters in the second zone, the lightning zone. You just barely qualify as having the power of a Celestial Immortal. For someone to have such power at the early Void stage...which school do you belong to? Who is your master?”

Ning was secretly surprised. Celestial Immortal?

Since the black-robed youth had already arrived at the entrance to the gorge, he clearly should’ve already made it past the lightning zone. This

meant he was far more powerful than Ning. Ning's Primaltwin at full power would be just barely at the average Celestial Immortal level; some particularly formidable and monstrously talented Celestial Immortals were far more powerful than him.

"My master's name is not for the likes of you to learn," Ning said.

"Oh, is he a True Immortal or Empyrean God?" The black-robed youth chuckled softly as he carefully scrutinized Ning's face. Ning, however, remained calm.

The black-robed youth shook his head. "Leave, hurry up and leave. Even I am unable to acquire the treasure within. Even if you were a hundred times stronger than you are now, it wouldn't suffice."

"A hundred times?" Ning frowned, not believing it.

"You don't believe it? Then listen to this; this treasure trove is divided into three forbidden zones. The first zone simply uses pressure and repulsive force! It is quite safe. The second zone is the lightning zone, and it is 540 meters long in total. As for the third forbidden zone, it forbids the usage of all magic treasures. Even I am unable to break through it."

The black-robed youth looked disdainfully at Ning. "And you? You haven't even overcome a Celestial Tribulation. You might be a peerless genius, but you are unable to advance past three hundred meters of the lightning zone. You must know by now that with each step forward, the power in the lightning zone increases dramatically. Only if your power increases tenfold will you be able to break through the second zone...but the third zone is even more terrifying. I imagine not even many Celestial Immortals are capable of breaking through it."

"What is in the third forbidden zone?" Ning couldn't help but ask.

"That's not for you to worry about," the black-robed youth said.

"Why haven't you left?" Ning asked.

"I'm a Celestial Immortal with an infinite lifespan. Since the treasure is here, I will slowly train here. Perhaps a chance will present itself and I'll be able to acquire it," the black-robed youth said.

Hearing this, Ning instantly felt irritated. He could sense the faint ripples of power coming from within the valley; the ripples were extremely old yet very powerful. “The Thousandbull Sword is almost at the level of Pure Yang treasures in power, but its ripples are vastly inferior. The treasure within must have been an extremely powerful one that was left behind from Pangu’s Primordial World.”

“However...I can’t even make it through the second forbidden zone. How am I supposed to pass all three?”

Ning stood there by the creek outside the lightning zone. He pondered quietly for a moment, then gritted his teeth, turned, and left.

Whoosh.

Ning quickly re-entered the invisible pressure zone, slowly forcing his way outwards.

“He’s gone?” The black-robed youth shook his head. “A young kid who was far too weak. Given his talent, though, he might have a shot at becoming a Celestial Immortal.” And then, the black-robed youth once more walked into the gorge.

“Immortal Darknorth, you returned?” On the way back, Ning once more encountered the Goldfur Bearking. The Goldfur Bearking was advancing again, but he had only traversed a kilometer beyond his earlier point.

“I’m not strong enough. Naturally, I have to return.”

Ning, in his three-headed, six-armed form, wielded six Immortal swords and chopped a path through the pressure pulses as he left.

“Not strong enough?” The Goldfur Bearking muttered to himself, “Is it possible that this Darknorth has already acquired the treasures? Still, from the look on his face, I’d say he isn’t lying.” Although he secretly mumbled and muttered to himself, the Goldfur Bearking wasn’t confident in being able to wrest any treasures from Ning’s grasp.

.....

Ning exited the Riverfang Mountains.

Turning his head, he gave the mountain ranges, perpetually shrouded by fog and clouds, a glance. He murmured softly, "Wait for me to train in the arcane art...I'll give you another try then."

Whoosh. A spatial ripple appeared, and Ning disappeared into it. He reappeared in the sky above the mountain peak of Mount Innerheart, a cloud beneath his feet.

"Come out." Ning willed it, and instantly a white-robed maiden appeared by his side. This was Ning's disciple, Bluecliff Xiaoyu.

"Master." Xiaoyu stood atop the cloud, staring at her surroundings. "Where are we now?"

Ning looked at his disciple, then turned to stare at the levitating Mount Innerheart. It had only been a month, but he had already accepted a disciple and killed ten great sinners. Bluecliff Xiaoyu's golden glow of karmic virtue stretched to more than nine hundred meters...and now, Ning's own clean aura of holiness had also transformed into the golden glow of karmic virtue!

However, his divine sense told him that his own golden light of karmic virtue merely stretched to be three feet long.

Actually, the process of accepting a disciple and killing the monster kings had already caused his clean aura of holiness to become quite dense; after he killed the wicked Patriarch, it suddenly transformed into the golden light of karmic virtue.

"Three feet of golden karmic light, compared to nine hundred meters for my disciple." Ning laughed, then pulled Xiaoyu by the hand as he flew upwards.

"Xiaoyu, the mountain up ahead is Mount Innerheart. This is the place where Master's school is located," Ning said with a laugh.

Xiaoyu stared at the massive levitating mountain, then lowered her head to look at the endless world beneath them. "Master's school?" She felt rather stunned.

They flew into Mount Innerheart, went up the mountain road, and soon

arrived at the gates. Xiaoyu was only Ning's disciple, and so Ning didn't take her to see the eldest apprentice-brother.

At the gates were those two azure-robed Dao-novitiates. When they saw Ning, they immediately bowed and said with great respect, "Patriarch."

"Mm." Ning nodded.

Still stunned, Xiaoyu let Ning tug her forward by the arm. After passing through the gates, Xiaoyu came back to her senses. She whispered, "Master, it seems as though those two novitiates at the gates were very powerful?"

"Both were Void-level Earth Immortals," Ning said casually.

Just as Ning's words came out, two extremely ancient and powerful Void-level Fiendgods walked over. Both of them called out with tremendous courtesy, "Patriarch?"

The feeling these two ancient Fiendgods gave Xiaoyu...was that they were even more terrifying than the monster kings. They caused her to quiver and shake! And yet, they referred to her master as 'Patriarch'?!

They continued walking up the mountain path of the Tristar Crescent Abode. As they did so, they encountered humans, monsters, and even Fiendgods, all of whom had powerful auras and many of whom were even more terrifying than the monster kings. And yet, upon seeing Ning, they all showed extreme respect, addressing him as either 'Patriarch' or 'Uncle-Master'.

"It seems as though my master has a very high status in his school. On our way over...it seems everyone we ran into had a lower status than him. I haven't even met a single person on his level," Xiaoyu murmured to herself.

"The Divinities Palace is up ahead," Ning said.

"Divinities Palace?" Xiaoyu looked curiously at the nine-storied Divinities Palace. Many disciples of Mount Innerheart were congregating outside of it, and they all respectfully bowed towards Ning and addressed him as uncle-master or as Patriarch. Little Qing and Uncle White ran

straight towards him; they were spiritually connected to Ning and knew exactly where he was.

"Master."

"Ning, child."

Both Little Qing and Uncle White ran over.

Right at this moment, a handsome, white-robed man walked over from the entrance to the Divinities Palace. This was naturally the controller of the Divinities Palace, Silvermoon. Silvermoon smiled as he walked over. "I heard, junior apprentice-brother, that you accepted a disciple and subdued viledoers in the world below us. This would be the apprentice you took on, yes? What a pretty little lass."

"I've finally met someone of the same generation as Master...and they seem quite friendly. He doesn't have any frightening aura at all," Xiaoyu mused silently to herself.

"Xiaoyu, hurry up and pay respects to your uncle-master," Ning instructed.

"Greetings, uncle-master," Xiaoyu said as she hurriedly bowed with respect.

"Since you've addressed me as uncle-master, I need to prepare a gift for you." Silvermoon shook his head and laughed. "It'll be hard for a little girl like you to make proper use of a good treasure. Mmm...keep this little toy with you. Even if a Celestial Immortal wants to kill you, it'll be able to protect you for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea."

As he spoke, he tossed a jade brooch towards Xiaoyu.

Xiaoyu was rather stunned. A Celestial Immortal's attacks? Able to withstand them for a short period of time? This tiny little brooch? Not even the treasure which her master had given her was this incredible.

"But...but..." Xiaoyu couldn't help but feel awkward at the 'pricelessness' of this treasure.

"Hurry up and take it," Ning chortled. "This jade brooch is nothing to

your uncle-master. He kills Celestial Immortals as easily as killing chickens.”

“Junior apprentice-brother, you...fine, I admit that I did indeed make this jade brooch in a rather casual manner. I’ll also give you another gift then, a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal. I’m not capable of forging them; I used treasures to trade for it.” Silvermoon handed over a Dao-seal to her.

Ning’s smile became incandescent. His senior apprentice-brother was an Empyrean God; although a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal was a treasure to Ning, it wasn’t much to Silvermoon. It was only fair for him to seize this opportunity to milk Silvermoon for a few things.

Xiaoyu blinked repeatedly.

Two treasures? Given away so casually? Kill Celestial Immortals as easily as chickens? This...what the hell type of school had she been recruited into?!

“Little Qing, show Xiaoyu around the Tristar Crescent Abode and help her familiarize herself with this place. Chat with her a bit as well; she still doesn’t know what sort of a school the Tristar Crescent Abode is,” Ning said with a laugh.

“Yes, Master.” Little Qing immediately responded with excitement.

Ning immediately said, “Senior apprentice-brother, I am going to go to the Three Realms Palace.”

“Go, go,” Silvermoon said, nodding his head and smiling. “It seems you are going to leave our master’s tutelage soon.”

.....

The Three Realms Palace.

Second apprentice-brother Crazy Ji was beaming merrily here as he waited for Ning.

“Senior apprentice-brother.” Ning bowed.

“Master told me that you passed the trial. This is the full copy of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. You can learn it now.” Crazy Ji held his fan in

one hand and used the other to hand over a scrolled bamboo book.

Ning's eyes instantly lit up. The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]? After he gained a basic level of expertise in it, his body would be like an Immortal-ranked magic treasure. He would definitely be able to give the Riverfang Mountains another try by then.

"Thank you, senior apprentice-brother." Ning immediately accepted the bamboo book. He sent his divine sense into it, and instantly an utterly prodigious amount of information began to flow into his soul.

# Chapter 29: Training in the Arcane Art

By the time Ji Ning came back to his senses, it was already dark.

He was still standing outside the small building. As for the nearby Crazy Ji, he had long since gone back to sleep and was snoring contentedly.

“Although my soul is unfathomably more powerful than it was back when I learned the [Starseizing Hand], it still took me many hours to process all that information.” A hint of a smile was on Ning’s face. This feeling of complete confidence was quite wonderful. He had fully memorized the method of training in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

“It truly is the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level.”

Ning smiled as he walked into the Three Realms Palace.

“Junior apprentice-brother, you can just put the complete copy of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] back in the Three Realms Palace. If you want to choose something else, you can do so.” Crazy Ji lay there, seemingly mumbling in his sleep. He then turned and started to snore again.

Ning smiled. He turned and bowed. “Yes, senior apprentice-brother.”

.....

After returning the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], Ning unhesitatingly walked forward to pick up another abridged book. Atop this book were the characters: [Houyi’s Archery].

Ning had dreamed of learning [Houyi’s Archery] for a long time now. His own divine ability was the [Starseizing Hand], a divine ability which caused his pair of hands to possess unfathomably great power. With one hand holding the bow, and the other drawing it...and in addition, [Houyi’s Archery] was a technique-focused ability. These two divine abilities, both ranked in the top ten of the Three Realms, could be used simultaneously and would synergize very well.

The first gave Ning’s twin hands unfathomable power. The second

would raise his archery skills to the limit. Combined...they would become one of Ning's most powerful killer combinations.

"However...this trial truly is difficult. Can I accomplish it?" Ning stared at the trial, frowning. "No matter what, I have to give it a try. There's no time limit, anyhow."

"Senior apprentice-brother." Ning put down the abridged book, walked to the doorway, and looked at the slumbering Crazy Ji. "I wish to learn [Houyi's Archery]."

"Go then. Come back after you pass the trial," Crazy Ji mumbled in his sleep.

Ning smiled, turned his head, and immediately departed.

Actually, although on the surface it seemed as though he was informing Crazy Ji, in reality his was telling his master, Patriarch Subhuti! After all, it was the Patriarch who would decide whether or not this technique could be taught to him.

Whoosh. Ning departed.

Crazy Ji suddenly sat up. Leaning against the wooden door of the hall, he frowned as he stared at the departing Ning. "He wants to train in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and [Houyi's Archery]? Doesn't this little junior apprentice-brother of mine walk the path of the Sword Immortal? Why is it that I feel as though he views [Houyi's Archery] as absolutely critical for him to acquire? No one in the entire Three Realms has ever reached a level of archery as terrifying as Houyi did."

The [Starseizing Hand] only required sufficient amounts of Five Elements essence; with it, one could train all the way to the Sixth Cycle and master it!

The same was also true for the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. Upon gaining a basic level of skill with it, as long as one fused enough magic treasures, one could master all nine of its cycles.

But the [Starseizing Hand] and the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] both needed astonishing amounts of items. The first required shocking amounts of

Five Elements essence, while the other required similarly shocking amounts of magic treasures. There were quite a few people in the Three Realms who trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], but the number who truly achieved mastery and an unbreakable, vajra-like body was very very low.

[Houyi's Archery] was completely different! It was a skill-based, technique-based ability. It required a certain level of comprehension and enlightenment. This made it even harder to master! It also required a person to constantly ruminate on the Dao of Archery...although Houyi's own level of archery had already surpassed the bounds of the actual Dao of Archery.

"A Sword Immortal...who is also going to split up his attention to walk the Dao of Archery?" Crazy Ji pondered. "Perhaps it is simply because this junior apprentice-brother knows that [Houyi's Archery] is one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms, and so he truly wishes to learn it. After he learns how truly difficult it is, he might just give it up."

.....

Within the Still Room in the underwater estate. Ning was seated in the lotus position as he began to train in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. This was a divine ability, and so he had to have his true body train it!

Whooosh. Ning let out a breath of air. A blurry golden light began to slowly appear around his body. The golden light was very faint at first, but it slowly grew denser until Ning seemed to be made out of gold.

"Change!" Ji Ning, who had been seated atop the netherwater jade bed, suddenly vanished. Atop the jade bed appeared a rock. However, this rock had a living aura; any Immortal cultivators would be able to immediately tell that it was extraordinary.

"Cancel." The rock disappeared and Ning once more reappeared.

For a Fiendgod Body Refiner at Ning's level, the divine body could be completely transformed into divine power, and vice versa! In fact, even a single hair could be transformed into a completely separate body! Thus, to transform one's self into a rock wasn't difficult; what was difficult was

to make it so that one's aura would be so retracted that one would be indistinguishable from a true rock.

"Retract the aura? Change even the aura of one's soul?" Ning murmured softly to himself, "This [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] truly is difficult to learn. However...once I gain a basic level of expertise, I can change my aura as I please and will be able to easily make it so that I am like a rock or a piece of dirt."

.....

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was the [Seventy-Two Transformations]. As noted, the term 'seventy-two' came from the term 'eight-nine'; in reality, the number of transformations it allowed was limitless. Rocks, trees, flowers, plants, animals...even humans, monsters, and Fiendgods! Anything that existed in the Three Realms, one could transform into. Even the aura would become absolutely identical.

Even those more powerful than the user would find it difficult to see through the transformation. Only those who specialized in extremely powerful 'god-eye' techniques or other special techniques, when actively using those techniques, would be able to see the truth! If they didn't actively use the special techniques, however, even they would be unable to realize that the tree before them was actually someone else transformed.

.....

Early dawn.

Bluecliff Xiaoyu, rather bored, walked out of her room.

"It's been half a year since Master brought me back to Mount Innerheart, but he's only taught me twice. He instructed me to go learn everything, such as Ki Refining Techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts, from the Divinities Palace." Xiaoyu felt rather resigned. She knew that some experts had strange temperaments, but she didn't expect that her master would care so little about her. She normally didn't even have a chance to meet him.

“Still...”

“Mount Innerheart truly is an incredible place.” Xiaoyu sighed in amazement. Over the course of the past half year, she was often together with Uncle White and Little Qing, as well as the other disciples of Mount Innerheart. Thus, she was beginning to learn more and more. And the more she learned, the more amazed she was!

Celestial Immortals? Their statuses was lower than her master’s!

Personal disciples? The others were all Pure Yang True Immortals or Empyrean Gods. The guard of the Divinities Palace was an Empyrean God. No wonder that day her master had told her that this uncle-master killed Celestial Immortals as easily as chickens!

Whaaaaat?! The entire Crescent world had been created by Patriarch Subhuti? He had set up his own cycle of reincarnation? The Old Patriarch had done this all by himself?

Xiaoyu now realized that the entire Crescent world was like a garden world for the members of Mount Innerheart. Supposedly, beyond the Crescent world, there was the even vaster Three Realms. Supposedly, this ‘Three Realms’ had many other major powers that were comparable to the Old Patriarch.

“Um.” Xiaoyu saw a large rock next to her as she walked forward. Without thinking too much, she plopped her rear down on it and sat down.

“I wonder when I’ll see Master again,” Xiaoyu murmured to herself. And then...

“Eh?” She suddenly frowned, glancing downwards at the stone beneath her. “Weird. If memory serves...there shouldn’t be a rock here. Where did this rock come from? Uh...well, this is Master’s Immortal estate; everything within it is under his control. No need for me to worry about it, I suppose. Mm...right. I’m going to go find that big dumb lunk. He’s at a fairly high level of enlightenment; he can provide me with some guidance.”

Bluecliff Xiaoyu stood up and quickly ran off.

Whoosh.

The stone transformed into a fur-clad youth, Ji Ning.

"...I was actually sat on by my disciple." Ning took a deep breath.  
"Fortunately, no one saw this. Um...right. Definitely can't tell anyone about this."

"No more transforming into rocks. I'll transform into a tree. I refuse to believe anyone is going to sit on me then."

Whoosh.

In a corner of the estate, there were some trees and flowers. Another tree, a small pine tree that was a few meters tall, now joined their ranks. The branches of the tree even fluttered in the breeze.

Ning had already more than half-mastered the rudiments to the transformation aspects of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. What he was doing every day was transforming into rocks, trees, creeks, grass, and other things. To this day, no one had been able to discover him. In fact, Ning's Primaltwin had visually searched, used divine sense, and even opened the 'Celestial Eye', but was still unable to discover any flaws!

When Ning was transformed into a tree, his bark, his branches, his leaves...they were absolutely identical to real ones. Even the aura of his soul had transformed into a tree's aura! There was nothing special about it at all!

.....

Time flowed on, day by day. Ning constantly trained in his transformation techniques, testing himself repeatedly and accruing more and more experience. Finally, after spending a year and three months on the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], Ning mastered all of the 'seventy-two' transformations.

"The final transformations truly were difficult. They took so much time! Still, I've finally mastered them. Change!"

Ning had been seated in the lotus position next to a creek, but suddenly his figure changed completely. Now, seated next to the creek was a handsome, fan-wielding, white-robed man; Empyrean God Silvermoon. He was identical in both appearance and aura. That incomparably powerful aura, so great as to cause others to tremble in fear...the aura of an Empyrean God...and the unique properties of Silvermoon's own personal aura...Ning had replicated it all.

"Let me give it a try."

Ning, appearing as Silvermoon, smiled as he walked through the Tristar Crescent Abode.

"Patriarch."

"Patriarch."

"Senior uncle-master."

"Master."

As he walked through the Tristar Crescent Abode, Ning heard others address him for the first time as 'senior uncle-master'. It must be understood that amongst the other personal disciples, Ning was the newest addition, and so most people just addressed him as 'uncle-master'.

"Haha. These Void-level Fiendgods and Diremonsters...none of them suspect a thing." Ning was in an extremely good mood. He occasionally even nodded to them.

"Strange. Why isn't Patriarch Silvermoon at the Divinities Palace?"

"It's quite rare to see Patriarch Silvermoon out for a walk, isn't it?"

"It is rather odd."

After Ning walked away, the disciples of Mount Innerheart quietly speculated amongst themselves. Silvermoon was simply too famous for his ferocity; he was truly a demon-like figure. The amount of sin which swirled around him was utterly inconceivable! Silvermoon had accumulated so much sin that he was no longer covered in the bloody light of sin; rather, covering him were the legendary karmic sinflames!

However, given how unearthly powerful Silvermon was, he didn't fear the karmic sinflames at all!

Ning quickly arrived at the Divinities Palace. In front of it, as always, were congregated many of the disciples of Mount Innerheart.

"Patriarch."

"Senior uncle-master."

They all called out with respect, and even Bluecliff Xiaoyu, who had been chatting with the other disciples, hurriedly rose to her feet and called out respectfully, "Senior uncle-master."

But Little Qing and Uncle White stared in amazement at Ning.

"Who are you?!" Because of their spiritual connection to Ning, both Little Qing and Uncle White knew that it was him. However, they couldn't help but feel completely amazed and confused. The terrifying aura of the white-robed man before them...his appearance...clearly, this should be Empyrean God Silvermoon! But their spiritual sense was telling them that this man before them was actuall Ji Ning.

This caused both of them to feel very strange. Previously, Ning had only displayed the ability to transform into a tree in front of them; he had never transformed into a person before.

"Mm." Ning nodded, then smiled as he walked into the Divinities Palace.

Within the Divinities Palace there was another white-robed man, also holding a fan. Their gazes met. Their appearances and their auras were identical.

"Someone who dares transform into my appearance? Second senior apprentice-brother has better things to do, and Lord Jiang doesn't have this sort of personality...junior apprentice-brother, it seems you've successfully trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]?" Silvermoon immediately guessed that it was Ji Ning.

"Formidable, senior apprentice-brother." The figure of one of the white-robed men turned blurry, then transformed back into the figure of a fur-

clad youth, Ji Ning.

# Chapter 30: The Power To Roam the Three Realms

Silvermoon shook his head and laughed. “It’s not that I’m formidable; it’s that there are only a few people at Mount Innerherat who have trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]. By process of elimination, I was able to guess that it was you, junior apprentice-brother.”

Ning nodded. The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was located in the Three Realms Palace; only personal disciples and those who had received special permission from the Old Patriarch could learn it.

“If you transformed into someone else, I might not have been able to tell that it was you,” Silvermoon said with a laugh. “These ‘seventy-two transformations’ cause a person’s aura to completely change; even the appearance of sin or karmic merit surrounding you changes. This truly is an incredible transformation divine ability.”

Ning nodded. Indeed. For example, when Ning transformed into a rock, he could use the technique to completely retract his three-foot aura of golden karmic light. If he transformed into a viledoer, he could transform to display the bloody light of sin.

“Back in the era of Pangu’s Primordial World, there was an ancient Diremonster who relied on these seventy-two transformations to transform into the appearance of a Buddha. He used it to trick people for thousands of years before being discovered,” 1 Silvermoon said with a laugh. “You have now gained a basic level of expertise into the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]; your foundation is set. These seventy-two transformations alone will serve as a top-notch escape method or hiding method.”

“However...at this level, it merely remains a deceptive tool, a hiding method. When you are truly in a dire situation, what matters the most is your combat ability,” Silvermoon said. “Junior apprentice-brother, although you’ve reached the early Void stage and are comparable to ordinary Celestial Immortals...I’m afraid that slightly more powerful

Celestial Immortals would be able to deal with you or even kill you.”

“I understand.” Ning truly did. Unless he was so lucky as to only encounter extremely weak Celestial Immortals, the amount of power he currently had was only enough to allow him to swagger around in front of those who had yet to overcome their Celestial Tribulation.

“That’s why I’ve come to find you, senior apprentice-brother. I’ve come to ask you for help,” Ning said with a laugh.

“Help?” Silvermoon waved his fan, then said in a leisurely manner, “Speak. What do you need?”

“I’m currently quite weak; forgot about the Thee Realms, even in this Crescent world, any random Celestial Immortal might be able to kill me. Thus, I wish to reach the Third Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] as soon as I can,” Ning said.

Silvermoon stared at him. “The amount of treasures consumed by the training of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] is utterly astonishing; even I had to spend countless ages to be able to train to my current Sixth Cycle! Can it be that you, you little brat, want me to give you my treasures for free to help you train? No way!”

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] used up far too many treasures. To reach the Ninth Cycle? Even Daofathers would feel pain at the cost!

Even a mighty demon like Empyrean God Silvermoon had only trained to the Sixth Cycle; logically speaking, Empyrean Gods should be able to reach the Ninth Cycle, but he simply didn’t have enough treasures.

“Of course I wouldn’t ask you to give them to me for free,” Ning said hurriedly. “During this trip of mine to the outside world, I acquired some Immortal-ranked magic treasures. I wanted to trade them to you for Immortal pills, senior apprentice-brother!”

“Trade for Immortal pills?” Silvermoon nodded lightly. Immortal pills referred to Immortal-ranked spirit-pills, Pure Yang spirit-pills, and Great Firmament spirit-pills.

“That’s acceptable.” Only now did Silvermoon agree. “Bring out your

Immortal-ranked magic treasures. I definitely won't make you suffer a loss, and I won't profit from this trade with you."

Ning smiled, then waved his hand. Whoosh. Instantly, one Immortal-ranked magic treasure after another appeared, hovering in the air. These were the spoils he had gained from killing the monster kings and the evil Patriarch on the last journey. In fact, he even took out the low-grade Immortal-ranked flying sword the Grand Xia Emperor had given him.

"Let me take a look." Silvermoon quickly spread out his divine power to bind each of the magic treasures.

There was no way to use divine power to actually control magic treasures, but upon overcoming the Celestial Tribulation and becoming an Empyrean God, things would change. Empyrean Gods were unfathomable in their power, and their divine power could be applied to all sorts of magic treasures. The Empyrean Gods and True Gods who were birthed from the primordial chaos were born with the ability to easily use magic treasures. Only the weaker Fiendgods, such as those that were born at the Xiantian level, were only able to use Bloodforged weapons.

"Mm." Silvermoon looked through the weapons, then said, "Three top-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasures, nineteen high-grade, twenty one middle-grade, and sixteen low-grade."

Silvermoon kept his calculations simple and by grade. For example, he counted the six scimitars which the Flamewing King had used as six separate items! That was why the number was so high.

"Junior apprentice-brother...the difference is pretty huge." Silvermoon looked at Ning, then said helplessly, "The amount of Immortal pills you can trade for with such a small amount of Immortal-ranked magic treasures...there's no way you can train to the Third Cycle."

Ning immediately asked, "How far off am I?"

"Even if I'm generous to the point of suffering a loss...I could at most give you sixty of my top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills! But to train to the Third Cycle, if you completely rely on such pills, you would need at least a hundred of them," Silvermoon said helplessly.

Ning felt resigned as well. He had kept behind a single low-grade Immortal-ranked flying sword for Little Qing, and had kept the Immortal-ranked magic item he had acquired in the underwater estate for Uncle White! He needed to use both the Thousandbull Sword and the Heavenraker swords. He had taken out every other magic treasure he had left. In fact, aside from the Heavenraker swords, he no longer even had three spare Immortal-ranked flying swords for his [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique!

“How about this?” Silvermoon waved his hand, and a piece of parchment appeared. “Write on top of this paper that today, you are borrowing a total of forty top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills from me. You have to repay me a hundred such pills within ten thousand years. If you are unable to do so within ten thousand years, then you’ll have to pay me back with the most valuable treasure you carry!”

Silvermoon waved his fan as he beamed merrily towards Ning.

Ning felt resigned. He had heard from others long ago as to what sort of a person this Silvermoon was; the reason why all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart secretly referred to him as ‘that demon Silvermoon’ was because he, an exalted Empyrean God, would seek opportunities to squeeze and extort even the ordinary disciples.

“Fine.” Ning lowered his head.

“Hurry up and write,” Silvermoon chortled merrily. “Junior apprentice-brother, the sword you used to display your swordplay last time was pretty good; it nearly has the power of a Pure Yang treasure. That sword alone is worth nearly a hundred top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills. I’m sure that within ten thousand years, you’ll have acquired even better treasures.”

Ning immediately began to furiously scribbling on the parchment.

Between fellow disciples, a written acknowledgment of debt was enough; everyone would give each other face.

“Here you go!” Silvermoon waved his hand and a white jade bottle flew towards Ning. “These are top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills that

were forged in Doushuai Palace. They contain extremely pure elemental essence and are very well suited for training in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].” 2

Ning had been instantly impoverished...and now owed a hundred top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills to Silvermoon. Still...Ning accepted this. He wasn’t strong enough to leave his master’s tutelage yet; any powerful Celestial Immortal was capable of annihilating him.

“The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].”

Ning sat on the netherwater jade bed within the Still Room. Hefting the jade bottle, he poured out a spirit-pill. The spirit-pill was a white-jade color, and it emanated a faint aroma of mouth-watering fragrance.

If an ordinary Zifu Disciple or Wanxiang Adept were to eat this top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pill, they probably wouldn’t even be able to refine it; their Zifus would explode! After all, the purity of the elemental ki within these pills was comparable to that used by Celestial Immortal. These sorts of pills were usually given to reincarnated Immortals, so as to allow them to reach an extremely high level of power in a short period of time.

Alternately, Celestial Immortals who had fought for a long period of time, or who had used up a great deal of energy in binding a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, would use them to instantly replenish their elemental ki.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh...

One pill after another came pouring out, each comparable to a high-grade Immortal-ranked magic treasure in value.

Ning swallowed them all in one gulp. He then immediately began to activate the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] technique. The purpose of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was to train his body to the point of making it as indestructible as a magic treasure! This required an enormous amount of energy...and top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills were purposefully designed for replenishing energy. As for ordinary liquefied elemental essence? Absorbing them took too much time; there was no way one could use them to activate the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

Rumble...

Ning's entire body immediately began to transform. His bones, his marrow, his sinews, his flesh, his skin, his hair...every part of his body was now changing. If previously Ning's flesh and bones could be described as tofu, then after using up the very first spirit-pill, they had reached the consistency of stone.

But of course, in reality, Ning's divine body had already been extremely powerful. From this, one could imagine how huge the improvement brought by the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was!

"The First Cycle is complete!"

Ning could sense how powerful his divine body had become. A single top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pill had allowed him to complete the First Cycle and allowed his body to become incomparably mighty.

Clang! Ning formed his finger into a sword and slashed at his other arm. Sword-light flashed past, but the only thing it left behind was a white smudge.

"My body is already comparable to a Heaven-ranked magic artifact. I can just stand there without doing anything and Loose Immortals will be unable to damage me at all. And this is just the First Cycle!"

"This [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] is far more powerful than whatever divine ability Adept Ninedeaths used back during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny. Her body was like a magic treasure, but by comparison...her technique could not compare to the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]." Ning didn't spend too much time thinking about it; after all, only a Primal-level Fiendgod could even begin to train in the basics of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

Adept Ninedeaths had only been a Wanxiang Adept; there was no way she could've trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], even if someone had given it to her.

"The second pill." Showing no hesitating at all, Ning began to digest additional pills. The incomparably pure elemental ki of the top-grade

Immortal-ranked spirit-pills flowed through Ning's entire body, being drawn into every part of it. Ning's body was like a sponge, ravenously drawing in the power of these pills...and then his body began to repeatedly transform, like a sword being reforged time and time again.

"The eleventh pill." As Ning was digesting and refining the eleventh pill, the Second Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was mastered.

.....

One spirit-pill after another was rapidly consumed. Ning's body was continuously rising in power as well, increasing in both endurance and resilience. Clang, clang clang! As Ning continued to train, rumbling and clanking sounds could be heard coming from within his body as his muscles and flesh clashed against each other. It sounded like two mighty mountains were colliding, and as Ning's heart beat, it sounded like a sea was trembling.

Ning knew that this was a form of tempering! Magic treasures would be tempered through magic fire and other sources of power, while the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] tempered the body. Every single organ, including even the skins and the hair, would be tempered nonstop by this technique. By now...a single strand of Ning's hair was so tough that even if a Loose Immortal were to wildly hack at it with full power, he wouldn't be able to damage it in the slightest.

Rumble...

Another booming sound could be heard from Ning's body. His muscles rumbled, his bones rumbled, his organs rumbled...the rumbling almost seemed to form into a wondrous sort of music.

Ning's skin was beginning to shine with a dark light. He seemed to have transformed into a terrifyingly powerful magic-treasure. Only when the dark light faded away did he seem like an ordinary person once more. His skin was very soft and white, seemingly quite tender; one could not tell just by looking at him as to how powerful he had become.

"Hahaha...I've finally completed the Third Cycle." Ning was overjoyed. Waving his hand, he immediately produced the Thousandbull Sword.

"Time to test my power."

WHOOSH! The Thousandbull Sword transformed into a black dragon of sword-light, carrying unearthly power with it as it chopped down against Ning's left arm...but it didn't even leave a white smudge behind.

"[Starseizing Hand]." Ning used his full power, launching an even more powerful blow!

BANG!!!!

A thunderous banging sound could be heard within the Still Room...but Ning's left arm still didn't have even the slightest hint of a mark at all on it.

"I've mastered the Third Cycle. My body is comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure now. When striking myself with full force, I can't even leave behind a tiny white mark. I imagine that even Celestial Immortals would only be able to stare at me, stupefied, without knowing what to do. This truly is the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level. Primaltwin, Heavenraker Sword Formation – Attack!"

Ning was utterly delighted. In front of him suddenly appeared the black-robed Ning, who immediately controlled the power of the Heavenraker swords, transforming them into nine streaks of sword-light and sending them howling forth as they stabbed towards Ning's bared upper chest!

\*

1. This is a reference to a story in Journey to the West, where a monster was transformed into the appearance of Buddha in order to trick travelers going on a pilgrimage to visit the real Buddha. He would eventually eat them.
2. Doushuai Palace, in Chinese legends, is the place where Laozi, the founder of philosophical Daoism, resides. In Journey to the West, this is also the place where Laozi concocts pills for heaven, and the place where Sun Wukong stole and ate countless pills of Immortality when

he was drunk.

# Chapter 31: Returning to the Riverfang Mountains

Rumble...

Ji Ning's bare chest was stabbed into repeatedly by the top-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords, but they were still unable to leave behind any mark at all. Although he was knocked backwards with each collision, he was still able to walk back to his original spot.

"Heavenraker – Blackwater Line!"

The black-robed Ning exploded with maximum power, unleashing the most devastatingly powerful stance of the [Heavenraker]. Whoosh whoosh whoosh! One sword-tear after another slashed through the air in wavy lines so thick that they each seemed to be like a river. The illusory rivers flooded into one location like all the rivers flowing into the sea as they merged into a single torrential black flow!

This torrential black flow represented all nine Heavenraker swords as they stabbed simultaneously towards Ning's chest.

BANG!

This time, Ning's true body wasn't able to stay standing; he was knocked flying away as he slammed into the wall behind him with a banging sound. However, Ning used his palms to push off from the wall, stabilizing himself and landing on the ground.

Ning lowered his head. He still couldn't see any hint of damage at all on his chest or his skin.

"What a divine ability. What a divine ability!" Ning felt utterly overjoyed. The whole point of leaving the Grand Xia for thirty years was to learn some formidable abilities before returning. And now...he had!

The [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] truly was the number one divine ability of the Three Realms for those below the True God level. The most powerful leaders of the Three Realms had joined forces in an attempt to develop a

divine ability that would result in a body as mighty as that of Pangu's. Although they hadn't been able to develop the Twelfth Cycle...the first Nine Cycles were already incredible.

Ning was extremely weak right now, after all; he was still far from becoming an Empyrean God. As for becoming a True God? That was an even greater distance away. Even if this divine ability truly did have a tenth, eleventh, or twelfth cycle, there was no way he would be able to train in it for the foreseeable future.

"I've gained expertise in this divine ability. I can now go to the Riverfang Mountains again!" Ning immediately rose to his feet, the furs once more reappearing around him.

.....

As Ning walked out of the Immortal estate, he collected it with a wave of his hand.

"Master, where are you going?" Bluecliff Xiaoyu was just about to enter the Immortal estate.

"I'm going down into the world. I should be back in a few days." Ning instructed, "If your Aunt Qing or Grandpa White ask, that's what you should tell them."

"Alright." Xiaoyu nodded obediently.

Ning left by himself. As he walked past the Divinities Palace...

"Junior apprentice-brother, junior apprentice-brother." Silvermoon beamed merrily as he walked over, fanning himself with his fan. "Judging from your high spirits, you must've just finished the Third Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], right?"

"Precisely so." Ning nodded.

There were two tough parts to training the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]; the first was the initial mastery of the concept of the 'seventy-two transformations', which was a bit difficult, and the second was acquiring enough treasures to temper one's body! Ning had gained a basic level of

expertise already; naturally, he had been able to train to the Third Cycle at one go after acquiring enough top-grade Immortal-ranked spirit-pills.

"How many pills did you use up?" Silvermoon asked with curiosity.

"Ninety-nine," Ning said with a laugh.

"Wow, it was just barely enough." Silvermoon nodded. "Work hard, junior apprentice-brother, and earn back enough treasures to pay me back."

"Definitely." Ning nodded. "I have business to attend to; I'm leaving now."

"Go, go." Silvermoon beamed as he watched Ning leave.

After Ning left, Silvermoon shook his head, utterly tickled with himself. "I, Silvermoon, am quite the clever fellow. I gave this junior apprentice-brother of mine a hundred Immortal pills, and in ten thousand short lazy years, he'll have to pay them back to me! I won't end up losing a single pill, and I'll have acquired dozens of Immortal-ranked magic treasures as well, as well as have him owe me a favor."

Actually, these treasures really meant very little to an exalted Empyrean God like him. However, Silvermoon loved to feel like he had made a clever bargain.

The Crescent world. The Star continent.

Deep within the Riverfang Mountains. Within the lightning zone, there were two figures that were seated on the ground. One of them was the Goldfur Bearking, while the other was a youth dressed in loose Daoist robes and whose eyes were like the stars.

"Elder brother," the Goldfur Bearking said hurriedly, "The lightning here is too hard to overcome. Even a Celestial Immortal like you has tried eight times without success. Just now, the two of us joined forces but we were still stopped at the 540 meter mark by the lightning bolts, giving us no chance to advance at all. This is our utmost limit. As I see it...we should invite another Celestial Immortal to come."

"You fool!" The robed youth frowned as he glanced sideways at the Goldfur Bearking. "How can we let word of such a treasure trove spread to others?"

"But...all we can do is sit here and stare. Elder brother, you know as well as I do that the black-robed youth has already passed through the lightning zone into the gorge. The more we delay, the greater the chances that he might acquire the treasures," the Goldfur Bearking said.

Ning had previously chatted with the black-robed youth, then gritted his teeth and departed. After Ning's departure, the Goldfur Bearking had mustered all of his power to finally break through the first forbidden zone, but upon encountering the lightning zone...although he was skilled at defense, he was unable to advance a single meter further after reaching the 360 meter mark. The black-robed youth had mocked him as well, and the Goldfur Bearking, worried that the youth might end up taking the treasures, had hurried out of the Riverfang Mountains and invited a good friend of his, Patriarch Limitless.

The two had immediately sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. Upon acquiring the treasures, they would split them evenly! Patriarch Limitless was a Celestial Immortal and thus a bit stronger, but the Goldfur Bearking was the one who had acquired the information regarding the treasure trove. Thus, they would split things evenly.

"There are already quite a few who know about this treasure trove. If word spreads further...the treasure probably won't end up in our hands at all." Patriarch Limitless shook his head. "You big dumb bear. Don't worry too much. When that black-robed youth said that there is a third forbidden zone here, he should've been telling the truth. If there wasn't, he would've left with the treasures long ago. Since he hasn't...that means that the third zone is very hard to overcome. If that's the case, then even if we do invite another Celestial Immortal, our chances of success will still remain low...but word will have spread to even more people. It's better for us to take things slowly."

"Fine." The Goldfur Bearking nodded.

"Let us both meditate on how to use a more appropriate formation for overcoming the lightning zone," Patriarch Limitless said.

"Alright." The Goldfur Bearking nodded again.

Just two hours after they had begun meditating, a series of rumbling sounds could be heard coming from the invisible pressure region behind them.

"An expert has arrived!" Patriarch Limitless frowned as he heard the rumbles. "The rate of advancement is very fast. Can it be that news has leaked to someone else?"

"It shouldn't have. You and I have already warned the other two surviving monster kings of us Twelve Monster Kings of the Eastern Flows about telling others and even forced them to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens." The Goldfur Beraking frowned. "As for that Immortal Darknorth, he gave up more than a year ago without coming back.. Can it be...can it be the imperial Qi clan? But they are so puny..."

Right as they were chatting...

Boom! A figure charged forward and landed on the ground. It was a fur-clad youth who was wielding an Immortal sword with an incomparably enormous aura of power.

"Immortal Darknorth?" The Goldfur Bearking was amazed.

"Young fellow," Patriarch Limitless said with a frown, "Who is your master?"

He had heard from the Goldfur Bearking about Ning; naturally, he had immediately guessed that for this 'Darknorth' to be so powerful at the early Void level meant that he most likely had an incredible master behind him. Perhaps this person also came from Mount Innerheart, like he himself did! However...given how many disciples Mount Innerheart had, how could he, an exalted Celestial Immortal, possibly give up this sort of treasure trove to another fellow disciple?

"Goldfur Bearking, this is your helper?" Ning's gaze flickered towards Patriarch Limitless. This man was an azure-robed youth with an

extraordinary aura.

"He is my elder brother, someone far more powerful than me: Celestial Immortal Limitless," the Goldfur Bearking said smugly.

"A Celestial Immortal?" Ning was startled.

Patriarch Limitless repeated, "Young fellow, I asked you a question. Who is your master?"

Ning chuckled but didn't respond. He just walked straight into the lightning zone.

Patriarch Limitless couldn't help but frown. Still, given how calm Ning was, he felt all the more certain that Ning's background must be incredible, and so he just said coldly, "Young fellow, this is the lightning zone. You need to make it past 540 meters of the zone before you succeeded. Given your power...you are far from being able to do it."

Ning continued to make his way into the lightning zone.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Instantly, one bolt of lightning after another began to hammer down. Ning remained quite calm, not resisting at all as he allowed the lightning bolts to slam onto his body.

"Even a Fiendgod Body Refiner will only be able to use his body to forcibly withstand the lightning in the lightning zone for the first thirty meters." Patriarch Limitless shook his head.

Ning continued to walk forward.

Thirty meters. Sixty meters. Ninety meters...

The lightning grew increasingly savage, but Ning continued to stroll forward, one step at a time, allowing the lightning to hit him at will.

"But, but but..." Patriarch Limitless and the Goldfur Bearking were both stupefied.

210 meters. 240 meters. 270 meters...

Ning continued to walk forward in a relaxed manner. The bolts of

lightning were now as thick as water barrels, and they came crashing down with utter savagery...but Ning seemed to be simply walking through a mild rainstorm. He felt quite relaxed and content; the clashes against his skin felt like an incomparably comfortable massage.

360 meters. 390 meters. 420 meters...

Ning continued to simply walk forward.

The black-robed youth had appeared once more at the entrance to the gorge. Even he stared in amazement at this sight. "It's only been a year since I saw this fur-clad youth...how did he suddenly become so powerful?"

480 meters. 510 meters...

"These fur robes of mine were formed from top-grade Heaven-ranked Daoist robes. They are extremely tough, resilient, and good at deflecting attacks; they are comparable to low-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords in endurance." Flying swords were too thin and sharp, and thus broke apart more easily! In terms of ability to withstand attacks, top-grade Heaven-ranked Daoist robes were indeed comparable to low-grade Immortal-ranked flying swords.

Bathed by countless bolts of lightning, Ning stepped past the 540 meter threshold...and the lightning instantly vanished.

.....

Patriarch Limitless and the Goldfur Bearking, on the other side of the lightning zone, were both completely dazed.

"He used his body to endure it all? But, but...at the 540 meter mark, the power of the lightning was comparable to full-force combination attacks from the two of us. That's most likely equal to a high-class Celestial Immortal." The Goldfur Bearking was truly amazed. "He's at the early Void stage, but he didn't even use a magic treasure...he just used his body to endure it all?! This body is too..."

"His body must be comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure." Patriarch Limitless' face suddenly changed. He was a disciple of Mount

Innerheart, after all; he suddenly thought of a famous divine ability, reputed to be the number one divine ability in the Three Realms for those below the True God level – the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

“To have a body of such toughness at this level of power...the only possibility is the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]! But only personal disciples of the Old Patriarch can learn the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], or those the Old Patriarch provides special dispensation to. Can it be that he is a disciple of the Old Patriarch?” Patriarch Limitless instantly began to panic as he thought of this possibility. He hurriedly sent a mental message to Ning, “Dare I ask, Immortal Darknorth...do you know Empyrean God Silvermoon?”

Empyrean God Silvermoon was the controller of the Divinities Palace; every single disciple of Mount Innerheart knew him.

“You know senior apprentice-brother Silvermoon?” Ning turned his head to glance at him.

“This junior, Limitless, pays his respects to you, uncle-master!” Patriarch Limitless hurriedly sent a respectful mental message to him. He didn’t suspect Ning of faking it at all, because no one from the outside world could even enter the Crescent world! In addition...there was no faking the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]!

Ning was startled. Still, it made sense; most of those in the Crescent world who overcame the Celestial Tribulation and became Celestial Immortals had been recruited into Mount Innerheart.

“Oh. If we have the chance, let’s chat more back at Mount Innerheart.” Ning turned once more to the gorge, then walked towards it. The black-robed youth at the entrance to the gorge frowned, then turned and walked into the gorge himself.

Soon, Ning entered the fog-shrouded gorge...and he could sense that the terrifying ripples coming from within the gorge were gaining in power.

# Chapter 32: Fiendgod Corpse

There were some grass and flowers within the gorge, but after Ji Ning stepped into it, he felt his heart shudder for some reason.

“Die!”

An ancient, primordial howl of rage smashed against Ning’s soul.

A series of ripples of boundless, terrifying killing intent surged towards Ning. Ning hurriedly visualized the image of Maiden Nuwa, and instantly the divine image of Nuwa appeared within his soul, stabilizing it considerably. After having spent so many years at Mount Innerheart, Ning had learned that the [Nuwa Painting] was a visualization technique passed down by Nuwa’s lineage that possessed boundless life-force. Even if the soul was to be badly wounded, through visualizing the [Nuwa Painting] one could quickly recover. This was one of the most awe-inspiringly famous visualization techniques that existed in Pangu’s Primordial World.

On the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace, there was a copy of the [Nuwa Painting] visualization technique, and it was described as one of the most supreme of nurturing and defensive techniques for the soul.

“This place is...?” Ning quickly came to his senses, and he stared at the scene before him in the gorge.

Because of the mist wreathing this place, Ning was only able to see to a distance of one or two kilometers. From far away, he could see a human-shaped creature that was lying on the ground unmoving. Ning could only make out the rough contours of two legs and an abdomen...but the legs alone were like massive blocks of stone that were over three hundred meters long.

“Given how strong the aura of death is here, it should be dead. It seems as though it was many hundreds of meters tall...given its size, it must have been a Fiendgod,” Ning secretly predicted.

This treasure trove region was extremely mysterious; there was no way

to investigate it through divine sense, and so Ning had to make guesses for everything.

“Die...”

“Die...”

Boundless amounts of killing intent surged forth in waves from that enormous Fiendgod corpse, smashing against Ning’s soul. The closer Ning moved towards the corpse, the more powerful the killing intent became, forcing Ning to constantly visualize the image of Maiden Nuwa to resist it.

“For the remnant killing intent left behind in a corpse to be capable of forcing me to use the image of Maiden Nuwa to resist it...if he was still alive, he probably would be able to kill me with ease.” Ning’s soul had been split in two long ago; if one counted the soul within the Primaltwin, he actually had three souls!

One soul was within his Primaltwin.

One soul was within his true body’s Primal Turtle-Snake, which had advanced to the Goldlotus.

Another soul had been completely fused with his true body’s very flesh and bones. Every hint of blood and flesh contained a hint of his soul. It was at this level that Fiendgod Body Refiners were capable of creating an entire body from just a bit of flesh and blood.

Anyone who trained as both a Ki Refiner and as a Fiendgod Body Refiner would have to split his soul at the Primal level. One part of the soul would fuse into the body, while the other would enter the Primal Turtle-Snake.

Ning’s Ki Refiner soul was finding it rather difficult to deal with the waves of killing intent, but his Fiendgod Body didn’t fear it at all, because his soul in his Fiendgod body was connected to every bit of his flesh and blood, making it incredibly stable. Now that Ning had also trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], even if the killing intent was hundreds of times more powerful, it wouldn’t be able to do anything to this Fiendgod body of

his.

.....

Ning moved forward one step at a time, purposefully taking a circular path around the enormous Fiendgod corpse as he slowly advanced.

Finally...Ning was able to see it clearly. The Fiendgod corpse had ashen gray skin that was stone-like in texture. The corpse had an ordinary, plain face. Its body was covered in wounds, and the black armor it wore had been torn apart in many places. By its side were two fiery arrows, as well as a mighty black greatbow with a shattered bowstring.

"I didn't expect that you would be able to come to this place. For a weak little early Void-stage fellow to possess such ability...admirable, admirable." The shrill voice rang out once more.

Ning turned to look towards the source of the sound. From afar, at the corner to the entrance of the gorge, he saw the black-robed youth in a seated position.

"Do you know Empyrean God Silvermoon?" Ning suddenly asked. This black-robed youth was most likely a Celestial Immortal, given that he was able to make it here. Most likely, quite a few of the Celestial Immortals of the Crescent world were disciples of Mount Innerheart. If they were fellow disciples, things would probably proceed more smoothly."

"Empyrean God Silvermoon? Heh heh, an Empyrean God? Not bad. But I've never heard of him." The black-robed youth sat there, staring at Ning. "Kid...it seems your background is significant, given that you know an Empyrean God. However...here in this treasure region, it doesn't matter who you know. If you want to acquire the treasures...it'll all be up to your own abilities."

Ning quietly came to the conclusion that this black-robed youth was most likely not a member of Mount Innerheart. When Ning had traversed the lightning zone, even the outside Patriarch Limitless had been able to guess that Ning was a member of Mount Innerheart...and yet, this black-robed youth didn't seem to react to that at all.

"There are still quite a few Celestial Immortals in the Crescent world who have not become disciples of Mount Innerheart...and some don't even know of it," Ning mused to himself.

"Kid, you've already passed through two of the forbidden zones. This is the last one, but let me warn you...the treasures on that Fiendgod's corpse aren't so easily acquired." The black-robed youth sat there lazily, seemingly waiting to mock Ning when he 'inevitably failed'.

Ning looked back at the black-robed youth. "I've come to take the treasure, but you aren't going to stop me?"

"How would I do that? Even the lightning zone wasn't able to damage you at all, you freak. Even if I attacked you, I'd be wasting my energy. If I had trap-type treasures, I might try and trap or bind you...but unfortunately, I don't." The black-robed youth spoke in a resigned manner.

Ning knew what the weakness of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was. Training to the Third Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] resulted in an extraordinarily powerful body, but if he encountered restrictive items like magic ropes or monster-sealing pagodas, he might be wrapped up or drawn into the magic treasures. Still...Ning was no fool. He would use his sword to block; to actually trap and bind him would be an extremely difficult matter. And even if he was trapped...he wouldn't die from that, in and of itself.

"Then I'm going to go take the treasure." As Ning spoke, he moved closer towards the Fiendgod body.

When Ning reached a distance of roughly three hundred meters from the body, suddenly...

The black greatbow next to the Fiendgod suddenly lit up. The bowstring of the black greatbow was shattered, but an utterly enormous flood of natural energy was gathering around the black greatbow. It actually created a second bowstring that was completely composed of natural energy, as well as a fiery arrow that was similarly composed of natural energy.

Swish! No one was controlling the black greatbow, but it shot the arrow straight out towards Ning.

The arrow shot through the air, moving lightning-fast and almost instantly appearing in front of Ning.

"Block!" Ning waved his arm, allowing the arrow to strike directly on his upper arm.

BOOM. The powerful collusive force sent Ning flying back hundreds of meters, smashing against the distant canyon walls. The canyon walls cracked apart with a rumbling sound as many rocks came crashing down...but with a backflip, Ning emerged from a large crater that had been created in the wall.

"What a treasure." Ning wasn't worried; to the contrary, he was delighted.

"You freak, you could even take that?" The distant black-robed youth was amazed.

Ning was incomparably excited. He stared at the black greatbow, surrounded by the natural energy of Heaven and Earth. "For it to be able to gather such natural energy without any elemental ki guiding it... clearly, the spirit of the treasure of this black greatbow has activated it. For it to have such power without even a person controlling it...this is inconceivable."

Long ago, Xue Hongyi had been able to forcibly subdue the Azuresilk Godfire Lamp. At the Wanxiang level, Ning had been able to use the [Starseizing Hand] to forcibly hold the Thousandbull Sword. And now, Ning's power was unfathomably greater than it had been before...but he had just been sent flying back by the natural energy gathered by an ownerless treasure!

"The Thousandbull Sword is top-grade amongst top-grade Immortal-ranked artifacts, close to Pure Yang treasures in power. Then this greatbow...it has to at least be a Pure Yang treasure, and if it is, it has to be either a high-grade or even a top-grade Pure Yang treasure. Or it might even be a Protocosmic spirit-treasure!" Ning instantly came to this

conclusion.

The magic treasure, without anyone controlling it, already had the offensive power of a Celestial Immortal!

"It makes sense. This Fiendgod must have died countless years ago, but his remnant killing intent is still so terrifyingly strong. Given how powerful he was, how could his bow be poor?" Ning frowned. "However... the bowstring to this black greatbow is broken, and tears have appeared on his armor. I wonder what sort of a battle he must have encountered for even magic treasures on this level to have been damaged. Even the Fiendgod himself perished...and strangest of all, the Fiendgod's body remained, even after he himself died!"

It must be understood that a Fiendgod's soul was completely intertwined with his blood and flesh. If so much as a single drop of flesh or blood remained, he could be reborn! Unless...

A supremely mighty power had been able to annihilate every single scrap of the soul that was within the Fiendgod's flesh and blood! Without any soul left in the body at all, the flesh would be useless.

"How massive a battle was this?" Ning thought back to the great tribulation that had resulted in the destruction of Pangu's Primordial World. That had definitely been an incomparably terrifying battle, one which even Patriarch Subhuti had been afraid to participate in. Daoist Threelives had killed multiple Fiendgod Daofathers in it before even he himself had perished.

"No matter what...although the black greatbow and the armor are both damaged, given how powerful they are without any owner, they must be incredible treasures."

Ning waved his hand, causing the Thousandbull Sword to appear. Ning then quickly advanced, once more pressing closer.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The black greatbow shot out more fiery arrows towards Ning, both the arrows and the bowstring formed from natural energy.

Ning, however, used his swordplay to block. His sword-light flowed out like water, deflecting the arrows of natural energy to the side. Ning was using one of the sword-arts from the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace known as [Water Filling the Heavens]; this was his most defensively suited sword-art technique.

Swish swish swish...

Suddenly, a large number of arrows shot out; in fact, up to ten arrows were shot out simultaneously, causing tens of arrows to instantly fly out within a short period of time. However, despite the arrows coming faster, the power of each arrow had naturally dropped.

Ning used either the Thousandbull Sword to block or his body to take the blows head on.

“Kid, although your divine body is like a magic treasure, this is just the attacks of a divine bow without a master; it’s not that impressive for you to be able to withstand it. Let me tell you this; once you reach thirty meters of the corpse, you’ll have entered the third forbidden zone. Passing it has nothing to do with the strength of your body, and the fact that it is as unbreakable as a magic treasure won’t help you.” The black-robed youth sat there, watching Ning advance and fight forward.

Ning forced his way forward, charging through the hail of arrows. When he reached a distance of thirty meters from the Fiendgod corpse, the natural energy surrounding the black greatbow dissipated, no longer attacking Ning.

“Whew.” Ning took a deep breath. At such a close distance to the Fiendgod body, the invisible aura of majesty surrounding it caused even his heart to shudder.

“The third forbidden zone?”

“No matter what I have to acquire this treasure.” Ning stared at the treasures on the corpse of the Fiendgod...but what drew his attention most was still that black greatbow.

# Chapter 33: Rahu Bow

Ji Ning's body flickered, then he transformed into his three-headed, six-armed form. He wielded the Thousandbull Sword in his hands, as well as five of the top-grade, Immortal-ranked Skyraker swords.

In the face of this third forbidden zone, Ning didn't dare to relax in the slightest. Only after fully preparing himself did he step forward towards the Fiendgod corpse, moving past the thirty-meter threshold and entering the field of the third forbidden zone.

Rumble...

"Ning, son, eat some more."

This was an incomparably familiar hall. The lit candles here were as thick as a child's arm, and the child-Ning was seated in front of a table. Atop the table there was a flagon of water as well as a plate of meat and pastries.

"This..." The child-Ning stared in front of him. In front of him was a woman, her gaze filled with benevolent love as she looked at him. "Why are you looking at me? Hurry up and eat."

Ning turned his head to look backwards. Indeed; behind him was seated a handsome young man, Ji Yichuan. However, he only gave Ning a frowning glance, then barked coldly, "What are you looking at? Focus on your food when you are eating!"

"Yes, father." Tears suddenly streamed out of the child-Ning's face, but he hurriedly lowered his head, picked up a biscuit, and began to wolf it down.

.....

Within the mountain gorge.

The black-robed youth remained seated in the lotus position at the corner of the gorge. He stared towards Ning, who had made it within thirty meters of the Fiendgod corpse, then shook his head. "The third forbidden zone isn't so easy to overcome. It tests the weakest, softest

parts of your soul. It doesn't matter how powerful your body is, how mighty your divine power is, or how formidable your sword-arts are; all of those are useless."

.....

The days child-Ning spent with his parents were very happy. One day passed after another, and the child-Ning learned both agility techniques and sword techniques.

One night.

The child-Ning arrived outside his parent's room. There was a female servant yawning sleepily outside. Upon seeing the child-Ning arrive, she couldn't help but feel surprised. However, she didn't stop him as he moved to knock on the door.

Creaaaak. The door opened.

It was the fur-clad Ji Yichuan who had opened the door. Upon seeing his son, he frowned and said coldly, "It's late. Why have you come here instead of sleeping?" Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow, left her bed and walked over, smiling as she rubbed the child-Ning's head. "Hurry up and go back to sleep. It's late."

"Father. Mother." The child-Ning suddenly said.

"Eh?" Yichuan and Snow both looked at their son.

"I want to hug you two," the child-Ning said.

Yichuan was puzzled, but Snow just laughed. "Silly boy." She immediately pulled Ning into her arms.

In his mother's arms, Ning stretched one of his own arms to tightly embrace his mother, then the other towards his father.

"Father..." The child-Ning looked at his father.

"You are just..." Yichuan gently shook his head, but he still moved closer, allowing Ning to hold him.

With one arm, he held his father. With the other, he held his mother.

Ning pressed against his parents, smelling their scent. He closed his eyes, tears streaming down his face. He said very softly, "I really want to continue like this, but...my memories are already beginning to grow blurry."

"Ning? Son?" Snow looked at Ning, and Yichuan look at him as well.

Ning raised his head, his tears blurring his vision. He just stood there and stared at his parents.

"Awaken."

"Awaken."

"AWAKEN!"

Ning's unwilling, angry roar suddenly filled the entire illusory world, shaking it and instantly shattering it like glass. Everything quickly vanished.

One illusory world after another appeared, each one playing on all the deepest desires in a person's heart. Greed...love...hate...obsessions...

"How can this be?" The black-robed youth, still seated in the corner of the gorge, stared at the scene before him in astonishment. Ning had already spent more than an hour within the third forbidden zone after taking his first step...but after that first hour, each subsequent step needed less than the time needed to boil a kettle of tea. One step at a time, he broke through the illusions until finally, all of them vanished.

The black-robed youth laughed, then said with a soft sigh, "So he is the one." And then, he disappeared into thin air.

.....

Ning arrived at the side of the Fiendgod corpse, having completely awoken. He stared at the enormous figure of the Fiendgod corpse, at the shattered armor it wore and the black greatbow with the snapped bowstring, as well as those two glowing arrows.

"Master...thank you."

Ning's gaze was distant and dreamy. He murmured softly, "Although

the time I spent in that illusory world was very short...it was the happiest I've ever been since I left Swallow Mountain. That experience made me even happier than acquiring these treasures left behind by this Fiendgod."

Ning knew quite well that this third forbidden zone had been created by Patriarch Subhuti himself. It must be understood that when Pangu's Primordial World was destroyed, it had been Patriarch Subhuti who had personally teleported each remnant onto his Crescent world. Naturally, it had also been Patriarch Subhuti who had set up the forbidden zones. As for which of his disciples would be able to acquire the relics and treasures from the Primordial World, that was up to luck and destiny.

"Young fellow." Suddenly, the figure of the black-robed youth appeared in the air above the black greatbow. He said delightedly, "I bet you didn't guess this, did you?"

"You are..." Ning was startled. "...the spirit of the treasure?!"

"Of course! When I told you I was a Celestial Immortal, I was just playing with you. I didn't expect you to actually pass the third forbidden zone. Based on what Patriarch Subhuti said back in the day, anyone capable of passing the third forbidden zone would have to have an incredibly formidable Dao-heart." The black-robed youth sighed. "Although you haven't overcome the Celestial Tribulation to become a Celestial Immortal yet, you aren't bad at all."

Ning laughed softly.

"You...don't seem that excited." The black-robed youth sat in the lotus position above the black greatbow. He said in amazement, "I bet you don't know who I am, right? Let me tell you. I am one of the top ten divine bows of the Primordial World, a high-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasure!"

"A Protocosmic spirit-treasure? Wonderful." Ning revealed a smile and said a word of praise.

"But...I don't feel as though you are that excited." The black-robed youth frowned.

"That's only because just a short while ago, I was given something even

more precious.” Ning smiled. “Please introduce yourself to me, as well as this ancient Fiendgod.”

The black-robed youth nodded. “In the era of the ancient Primordial World, the major powers once killed an incredibly terrifying creature named ‘Rahu’. <sup>1</sup> They used the various components of Rahu’s corpse, mixed with many other incomparably precious materials, to finally forge a top-grade Pure Yang spirit-treasure. That would be me...and the name given to me was the ‘Rahu Bow’. Over the course of countless ages after my creation, my spirit grew increasingly powerful until I finally evolved to become a Protocosmic spirit-treasure. As soon as I made my breakthrough, I became a high-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasure.”

“Oh.” Ning nodded.

“Just ‘oh’?! I’m one of the ten great divine bows of the Primordial Era! Only one bow, the legendary Houyi’s Bow, was ranked as the undisputed number one; the rest of us, such as the Qiankun Bow or the Blacknether Bow are all ranked on par with each other.” The black-robed youth said arrogantly, “In fact, during that great tribulation, all of Master’s Pure Yang treasures were damaged, and even the spirits of those treasures were destroyed. I was the only one left.”

Ning chortled. “But your bowstring is broken.”

“You can just help me get another bowstring, right?” The black-robed youth shook his head. “You need to understand that for divine bows like myself, the bow shaft is what matters; that’s where the increased power comes from. But of course, the bowstring is also very important. In the future, I’ll help guide you to picking or forging a good bowstring.”

“Alright.” Ning asked, “How should I bind you, then?”

“Just use your elemental ki. I’ll give you all the help I can,” the black-robed youth said. “I’ve been here for an eternity. I’ve been bored senseless.”

“Alright.” Ning immediately began to bind it.

Generally speaking, binding Mortal-ranked, Earth-ranked, Heaven-

ranked, Immortal-ranked and Pure Yang treasures all had certain requirements in terms of elemental ki. For example, one had to at least be at the Void level to bind Immortal-ranked magic items, or at the Celestial Immortal level to bind Pure Yang treasures.

However, Protocosmic spirit-treasures had the blessings of Heaven and Earth. They were extremely mysterious...and if the spirits of the treasures was willing, they could allow even an ordinary mortal to use them!

If they were unwilling...even Celestial Immortals would be unable to bind them. Perhaps Pure Yang True Immortals could forcibly bind them, but if the spirit of the Protocosmic spirit-treasure were to resist, the binding process would be extremely tiresome. It would have to be done at one go; if one were to pause midway through, the efforts would be for naught, and one would have to start from scratch again.

Thus, binding a Protocosmic spirit-treasure was very troublesome. Fortunately, the Rahu Bow had a good impression of Ning. By overcoming the third forbidden zone, Ning received his acknowledgment.

.....

Just a short while later, the binding process was complete.

Ning heft the Rahu Bow in his hands. He could sense the limitless power hidden deep within it; this was a sort of sinister might that also carried a sort of power that was akin to the ripples of water. This power was unfathomably deep and infinitely powerful.

"In you go." Ning waved his hand, and the Fiendgod corpse next to him was collected as well.

Instantly, all of the ancient restrictive formations that had existed within the Riverfang Mountains were automatically deactivated. Previously, divine sense could not be used to search the region, but now it could.

Ning used his divine sense to sweep the region, locating the Goldfur Bearking and Patriarch Limitless outside the gorge.

"Time to go back." Ning flew into the skies, then immediately executed

a spatial teleportation. Entering the spatial ripples, Ning disappeared into thin air.

.....

“Divine sense?” Both the Goldfur Bearking and Patriarch Limitless were stunned. There was no way to use divine sense within this region...but just now, they sensed someone scan them with it.

“The restrictions are gone.”

“The lightning zone is gone as well.” They quickly discovered that even the terrifying ripples that had emanated from deep within had also disappeared. By the time they charged into the gorge...they saw nothing within it at all.

The Riverfang Mountains had become an extremely ordinary mountain range. Although there were some peculiarities to it, it was no longer anything special.

“The treasure was taken away by uncle-master Darknorth.” Patriarch Limitless knew what had happened.

.....

Ning returned to Mount Innerheart. He first rested for a day, then went into the mountain forests of Mount Innerheart. A violet greatbow appeared in his hand; this was a Heaven-ranked treasure.

“The test for [Houyi’s Archery] really isn’t easy.” When Ning thought back to the trial mentioned on the abridged version of [Houyi’s Archery], he couldn’t help but feel a headache.

It really was too hard. This was the hardest trial of the Three Realms Palace.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Suddenly, a voice rang out.

Ning turned his head to look, only to see a hatchet-carrying swarthy-skinned man wearing hemsack clothes, a grass hat, and grass shoes come walking towards him with a smile.

“Eldest apprentice-brother,” Ning hurriedly greeted him. Mount

Innerheart was vast; he needed some additional space for training in archery, and so he had left the Tristar Crescent Abode and come to the mountain forests outside of it. He hadn't expected to run into his eldest apprentice-brother.

"Why have you come here?" The woodcutter asked him.

"I want to train in archery," Ning replied.

"Oh?" The woodcutter glanced at Ning's greatbow, then asked, "[Houyi's Archery]?"

"Right." Ning nodded. "But only the trial for [Houyi's Archery] for now."

"That's not easy. Train hard." The woodcutter smiled, nodded, then leisurely sauntered away, hatchet over his shoulders.

\*

1. This is the name of a Hindu demon that swallows the sun.

# Chapter 34: When The Arrow Flies...

Ji Ning stood there in an empty field within the mountain forest, holding the bow in front of him as he stared towards the distance.

Ten thousand kilometers away, at another part of Mount Innerheart's forest, there was a black-robed Ning. He waved his hand, and next to him appeared an archery target.

"I need to hit the archery target dead center from ten thousand kilometers away." The black-robed Ning shook his head slightly.

This was the trial for [Houyi's Archery]; without the usage of divine sense and without using elemental ki or divine power to actively control the trajectory of the arrow, using just raw, primal physical force...one had to hit an archery target dead center from ten thousand kilometers away. The center of the target was just one inch in size. One had to hit it ten times in a row!

This was an extremely difficult trial.

Without the usage of divine sense...even most Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals could just barely see ten thousand kilometers away. As for the heart of the archery target? There was no way to see that clearly at all. In addition, because there was a separation of ten thousand kilometers, there would generally be some mist, trees, and other things impeding one's vision, causing one to be unable to see clearly.

In other words, one of the prerequisites for passing this trial was the possession of a divine ability akin to the [Farseer Eye].

This divine ability, when trained to the peak, could allow one to clearly see past a distance of a million kilometers or even more!

Naturally, Ning had never trained in the [Farseer Eye], but he had trained in the even more formidable [Torch Dragon's Eye]. Ning had learned the first part of the [Torch Dragon's Eye] in the imperial treasury of the Grand Xia, which was suited for Fiendgods up to the Void-level. Over the course of the many years he had spent here at Mount

Innerheart, when Ning was relaxing, he would harvest some of the Polaris light from the Nine Heavens and refine it within his eyes, forming it into the ‘innate torch-light’!

Although the training process was quite difficult, Ning had still managed to reach the second stage of the innate torch-light.

Upon using this divine ability, Ning could use his naked eye to clearly see an ant that was a hundred thousand kilometers away.

“I’ll give it a try.”

Ning stood there within the mountain forest. He executed the [Torch Dragon’s Eye]; instantly, both of Ning’s eyes began to shine with the light of a torch. If an ordinary Immortal cultivator were to exchange glances with Ning right now, while Ning was intentionally releasing his power... that cultivator would first feel as though his vision had just turned completely white, followed by the entire world turning dark and pitch-black.

Temporary blindness...and some weaker individuals would become permanently blind!

Whoosh whoosh whoosh....as Ning executed this divine ability, countless rays of light came from far away, gathering within Ning’s eyes. Countless rays of light reflecting off of countless objects were all being gathered.

The trees, the creek, the pool, the mountain path...everything was within Ning’s vision now.

This included the archery target that was ten thousand kilometers away, as well as the black-robed Primaltwin Ning that stood next to it.

“Can’t use divine power or elemental ki to control the arrow.” Ning waved his hand, and a black arrow appeared in front of him. He nocked it onto his bow, the pulled the bowstring.

Swish!

Ning’s raw physical power was utterly astonishing; he was fully capable

of tossing around an entire massive mountain as a toy by now. He instantly pulled this violet Heaven-ranked greatbow to a perfect full draw.

Ning sensed the wind...

The wind was blowing...

For archery, being able to sense the wind was very important. The wind would have a tremendous impact on the arrow. When Ning was a child, he had spent a tremendous amount of effort training in archery. However, after embarking on his Immortal path, he had stopped training in it; after all, his current level of archery was already sufficient, and when truly necessary he could use his elemental ki to control his arrows, causing it to curve and arc in small degrees. That way, even if he missed his shot due to the distance simply being too great, he could adjust the arrow mid-flight!

But now Ning was forbidden from using elemental ki to control the arrow. He couldn't even use divine power!

"The speed of the wind...its changes..."

"Right about...now..."

"Go."

Ning's eyes blazed with innate torch-light as he stared fixedly towards the distance. The fingers of his right hand suddenly relaxed.

Twang!

The arrow instantly transformed into a streak of light, piercing through the heavens.

The trees in its path were pierced through, and the stones in its path were shattered. However, due to these impediments as well as the changes of the wind...these seemingly minor factors caused an astonishing amount of impact over the course of ten thousand kilometers. Swish! The arrow missed the target by nearly three kilometers.

"Uh..." Ning's eyes were blazing with innate torch-light; he could clearly see what had just happened. He couldn't help but feel flabbergasted. "I

was off by that much?"

Three full kilometers?

This was ridiculous!

"I'll give it another try." Ning once more nocked his violet greatbow, then sent out yet another arrow.

Twang!

The sound of the bowshot rang out once more, and the arrow itself transformed into a streak of light that flew into the distance. This time, the arrow missed the target by more than five kilometers.

"Mm." Ning frowned.

"Let's do that again."

One arrow after another flew out. Some were off by three, four, five kilometers. Sometimes, when Ning was lucky, the arrow would make it to one kilometer. One time, when Ning was extremely lucky, the arrow passed the target by a few dozen meters.

Ning shot off more than ten thousand arrows at one go before coming to a halt. For an early Void-level Fiendgod like Ning, whose body was comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure, shooting arrows was a very simple matter on a physical level. His mental energy, however, had been used up!

"I knew it would be hard, but I didn't expect there would be so many problems." Ning had tried more than ten thousand times, and in doing so discovered many of the problems.

To simply rely on raw physical force in shooting an arrow ten thousand kilometers and hitting the center of a target...

The first problem was that the trees and stones between him and the target served as forms of obstruction. When the arrow passed through them, it would be impacted, albeit by a tiny, minute amount. Although Ning's raw power was so great that his arrows would only be impacted slightly...all of the accumulated obstructions over ten thousand

kilometers would still cause tiny deviation in the flight path. A tiny deviation magnified over ten thousand kilometers would result in a huge deviation.

The second problem was the wind!

Ning had mastered the Dao of the Gale during the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, and his heart had long ago become one with the wind. His wind-sense was extremely accurate by now. However...the wind that Ning could sense was only the wind during the instant the arrow was released! In addition, it was only the wind around Ning himself!

As the arrow flew forward, the wind would change!

In addition, the wind around Ning might be very weak, but five thousand kilometers away there might be a storm.

Even though he could still get a vague sense for how the wind was off in the distance, and even though Ning's arrow was very fast...it would still be affected by it.

.....

These were the two major problems that made it so that hitting the target dead center from ten thousand kilometers away was very difficult.

"What should I do? Right...I have the spirit of a Protocosmic spirit-bow. He must have seen divine archers of the Primordial Era train before." Ning instantly willed the spirit of the Rahu Bow to be summoned forth.

Whoosh. The black-robed youth appeared next to Ning.

"What do you need from me?" The black-robed youth looked at the bow in Ning's hands. "Oh, training archery?"

"Rahu Bow, I wish to train in [Houyi's Archery]," Ning said directly. "However, I have to pass a trial before I can do so. This trial forbids the usage of divine sense, and it also forbids me from using divine power or elemental ki to control my arrows. Just by using raw physical strength, I need to hit the center of a target from ten thousand kilometers away. The center is only one inch in size. I have to hit it ten times in a row to

succeed."

"[Houyi's Archery]?" The black-robed youth called out in amazement, "Master, you have a chance to learn [Houyi's Archery]?"

Ning nodded. "But, I have to pass this trial first."

"This trial is pretty hard. Shoot a hundred arrows and let me take a look first," the black-robed youth said.

"Alright."

Ning immediately shot out another hundred arrows. Although he knew where the problems lay...there was nothing he could do about it. He failed every time by an enormous margin.

The black-robed youth watched from afar. Through using his invisible senses, he could naturally see the target that was more than ten thousand kilometers away.

"How was it?" Ning looked towards the black-robed youth.

"It seems you have a bit of a foundation. I thought you'd be off by at least a hundred kilometers." The black-robed youth nodded. "The art of archery...the most important part of it lies in 'accuracy'. The more formidable an archery technique, the more powerful the arrows it unleashes, but as for accuracy? For powerful archery arts, it is very difficult to use divine power to improve the accuracy of a shot, and so accuracy is extremely important."

Ning nodded.

"Start from the basics. First shoot from a hundred kilometers," the black-robed youth said.

.....

Under the guidance of the Rahu Bow, Ning once more began to train in archery. Although the Rahu Bow had never trained personally, he had seen many of his successive masters train in archery. Those were the divine archers of the Primordial Era!

First, a hundred kilometers.

Then two hundred. Then three...

Ning spent nearly three years training in accordance with the guidance from the Rahu Bow, but was still only able to hit the center of targets from 1200 kilometers away when using just raw force. 1200 was a limit for him; no matter how hard Ning tried, he was still unable to improve at all.

"What's going on? Generally speaking, this is how one trains in archery; one needs to master one's wind-sense and one's sense of Qiankun. You've accomplished both, and the speed of your arrow isn't bad. But why is it that I keep on feeling as though you are missing something?" The black-robed youth was extremely puzzled.

He had only watched others shoot arrows, after all; he himself wasn't a divine archer.

Over the past three years, Ning had even gone to the Divinities Palace to pick out some archery techniques from the eighth floor. He had ruminated over them alongside the Rahu Bow, which was why he had improved this much over the past three years.

"What's going on?" Ning sat down on the ground, feeling perplexed.

"Junior apprentice-brother, still training archery?" A laugh rang out as the woodcutter came walking over, hatchet over one shoulder and firewood over the other.

"Eldest apprentice-brother." Ning hurriedly rose to his feet, then said with embarrassment, "I've trained bitterly for three years, but I'm still unable to pass the trial for [Houyi's Archery]."

"[Houyi's Archery] is indeed extremely difficult, and the trial is quite difficult as well. Shoot a few arrows for me to see," the woodcutter said with a smile.

"Alright." Ning was instantly overjoyed.

The eldest apprentice-brother was the absolute number one expert amongst the Old Patriarch's disciples. Even the second apprentice-brother, Crazy Ji, admitted his inferiority, as did all of the other disciples.

In fact, when Ning was chatting with Silvermoon, Silvermoon had secretly told him that their eldest apprentice-brother was definitely at the Daofather level of power. Given his incredible power and given how long he had lived here in seclusion, he had almost assuredly analyzed a technique like [Houyi's Archery], one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

Although there were quite a few disciples of the Old Patriarch who trained in [Houyi's Archery], none of them were that formidable in it. Given their eldest apprentice-brother's power, however...he surely was.

Twang! Twang! Twang! Twang! Twang! Twang!

One arrow after another shot out. Ning used all of his power while attuning to both the wind and to the Qiankun. In this instant, the world and the wind were all one with his heart. It was as though he himself was the master of the entire world, as though he was the master of countless winds. In fact, even some of the distant transformations of the wind were held within his heart, as though his subconscious was whispering to him of what would happen. This state was the state known as the Dao Domain of the Dao of Archery. Given what a high level of comprehension Ning was at, and given that the Dao of Archery was heavily related to both 'wind' and 'Qiankun', Ning had advanced fairly quickly along this Dao.

One arrow after another flew out, striking towards the distant target, more than ten thousand kilometers away.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Each of the arrows howled past the target by more than ten meters. In fact, purely thanks to luck, one of the arrows actually struck the target. However...it only hit the target, not the center of the target.

"Alright. You can stop now," the woodcutter said.

"Please guide me, senior apprentice-brother." After halting, Ning respectfully asked for advice.

The woodcutter laughed. "Your fundamentals are quite solid. However...

you are lacking in the most important aspect.”

“The most important aspect?” Ning was puzzled.

“Right.” The woodcutter nodded. “Remember this: When the arrow flies, the heart flies with it. Once you reach this level, you’ll be able to hit the center of the target from ten thousand kilometers away.” After speaking, the woodcutter turned and leisurely departed, still carrying his hatchet and his firewood.

Ning stood there unmoving. He murmured to himself, “When the arrow flies, the heart flies with it?”

# Chapter 35: ...The Heart Flies With It

As he watched the woodcutter depart, Ji Ning grew increasingly puzzled. “When the arrow flies...this part I understand. But ‘the heart flies with it’...what does that mean?”

Twang! Twang! Twang!

Ning pulled his bow, testing out a few more arrows, growing increasingly puzzled as he did.

“Little master.” The black-robed man appeared once more, face full of excitement. “Your eldest apprentice-brother said, ‘When the arrow flies, the heart flies with it.’ I think I somewhat understand.”

“Oh?” Ning revealed an expectant look on his face.

The black-robed youth immediately explained, “I’ve gone through many masters and watched many of them train in archery, as well as watched them train their successors and descendants in archery. I remember often hearing them say something; ‘You need to put your heart into it. Put your heart into the arrow.’ When I was guiding you, I didn’t think of these words, because I thought they were just casual words of encouragement, but now...it seems those words must have some special meaning.”

Ning was an extremely intelligent person. This guidance from the black-robed youth didn’t clearly point at what was necessary, but Ning now already had his own ideas.

To use the heart?

To put the heart into the arrow?

When the arrow flies? The heart flies with it?

“My guess is that ‘the heart flies with it’ means exactly that; having your heart and mind fly along with the arrow,” the black-robed youth said. “This ‘heart’ is most likely a reference to a sort of invisible force.”

Ning listened to the black-robed youth, thinking to himself at the same time. He had shot out tens of thousands of arrows every day for nearly a

year; thus, he was familiar with all the technical tricks to it. Actually, Ning had already vaguely touched upon the level of having the heart fly with the arrow, but no one had been able to guide him to actually breaking through to it.

Ning once more nocked an arrow to his bow.

“The air...”

“The wind...”

In this instant, his heart became one with the Heavens and the Earth... and his will began to fill the arrow.

Soon, Ning managed to brush against the level of ‘forgetting the self’; although his heart had become one with the Heavens and the Earth, everything around him seemed vague and blurry, as his heart and will were focused completely on his arrow.

Twang!

A thunderous twanging sound. The arrow shot through the air, and Ning’s invisible will was fused into it. In fact, he had an extremely strange feeling; he felt as though he himself had transformed into an arrow! As the arrow shot through the skies, as it pierced through the trees, Ning felt as though it was he himself who was shooting through the trees. This sort of feeling, where his mind and heart were one with the arrow, was quite strange and marvelous...

However, after the arrow flew for a hundred kilometers, that sort of invisible connection between his heart and the arrow dissipated; Ning was no longer able to maintain the wondrous feeling of him having transformed into an arrow.

Swish!

The arrow finally plunged deep into the target that was ten thousand kilometers away...but of course, it was still quite a bit off from the heart of the target.

“That’s the feeling! Right. That’s the feeling.” Ning began to laugh

loudly out of excitement as he jubilantly lifted the bow up with energy. “Right. When the arrow flies, the heart flies with it. I felt as though I had transformed into an arrow myself...this was a wondrous feeling, and in that state, I felt as though I was able to control the direction of the arrow.”

“I’ll try again.”

Ning once again nocked an arrow and drew his bow. Twang! The arrow shot through the skies, and Ning once more felt as though he were an arrow, with his heart focused upon the arrow.

Change directions! Change directions!

While flying through the air, the arrow suddenly began to change directions. Although the magnitude of the change was very small, as Ning repeatedly strove to influence it, the arrow began to arc outwards and fly even farther, before finally overshooting the target by thousands of kilometers.

“When the arrow flies, the heart flies with it...”

“This is the feeling. However, I’m only able to maintain this state for a hundred kilometers; any farther, and my will dissipates and becomes unable to maintain contact with the arrow.” Ning nodded to himself. This sort of invisible, formless feeling of his will being one with the arrow was a strange, subtle thing. However...there was indeed such a thing as a power forged from heart, from will.

That ancient Fiendgod corpse of the previous owner of the Rahu Bow was proof of it. Despite having died so long ago, the remnant, vestigial will of death and killing still was enough to cause Ning’s heart to quiver.

Strictly speaking, the ancient Fiendgod’s soul had been destroyed long ago...so where did that invisible will and intent come from?

This was what ‘heart’ was all about.

It was an invisible force! The power of the heart! It was different from divine power, elemental ki, and soul power. It was an extremely illusory, difficult-to-detect sort of power, but it did indeed exist. A truly divine

archer would have to be able to master this power, the power of heart; only by mastering it could one become one of the formidable divine archers of the three realms. And this was just one of the prerequisites!

“Use the heart.”

“The heart!”

“The heart flies with the arrow!”

Ning began to train.

He knew very well that given how firm his Dao-heart was, the power of his heart should logically be quite formidable. However, he was still only able to keep his heart merged with the arrow for a distance of a hundred kilometers. The reason for this was...his heart was not sincere enough! His heart was supremely sincere towards the Dao of the Sword, but it was not yet sincere enough to the Dao of Archery.

Only with sincerity would the power of the heart grow!

Fortunately, thanks to his three years of painstaking training, Ning had established a solid foundation, and as Ning’s attitude towards the bow had changed and as his feelings towards the Dao of Archery grew increasingly resolute, the power of his heart had grown increasingly strong. In the legends, there were some truly formidable figures who, no matter what they trained in, were able to maintain a supremely loyal heart to whatever they focused on. By doing so, they were able to improve at a truly astonishing rate.

The power of the heart was sometimes even more important than raw talent or comprehension.

A thousand kilometers.

Two thousand kilometers.

Three thousand kilometers.

As the days passed, the connection between Ning’s heart and his arrow became increasingly strong.

“Wow! Little master, when you draw the bow, you now have a certain

aura...an aura that only the divine archers of the Primordial Era used to have!" The black-robed man watched excitedly from one side.

When one had a heart that was supremely loyal to the bow, there would be a difference that would be very hard for most to detect, even if the difference was magnified ten thousand-fold. However, that innate charisma really did make an impact. The Rahu Bow, which had passed through the hands of quite a few divine archers, was definitely able to tell the difference.

Twang!

Swish!

The arrow plunged straight into the heart of the target.

Ning, however, maintained his calm as he continued to shoot arrows. Ning was now able to hit the target dead-center every so often, and even when he didn't, he was still definitely able to hit the target. To be able to occasionally hit the target dead-center from a distance of ten thousand kilometers, with trees and boulders blocking the way, while using nothing but raw physical strength was already a truly astounding feat...but unfortunately, passing the trial required one to accomplish this feat ten times in a row.

Five thousand kilometers. Six thousand kilometers...

Ning's heart was able to ride with the arrow for increasingly long periods of time. Under this sort of training, Ning's Dao-heart was actually beginning to grow even more powerful, and his eyes were beginning to grow increasingly bright! When he drew his bow...anything he stared at would feel as though a God of Death was staring at them from afar, causing a sort of inexplicable, nameless terror!

This was the sort of mental, psychological sensation of threat which only a true divine archer was able to impose upon the minds of his foes.

Ning's own heart was like an arrow, seeking to stab itself into the enemy's own heart. The enemy would subconsciously sense this and feel terrified!

Eight thousand kilometers. Nine thousand kilometers...

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

An arrow struck straight into the heart of the target. So did a second arrow. A third. A fourth...Ning shot out a hundred arrows, and each and every one of them struck the target dead-center. The inch-thick heart of the target was completely filled with a tight cluster of arrows now.

"Whew." From ten thousand kilometers away, Ning let out a sigh.

This sort of state, where his heart rode with the arrow, consumed a tremendous amount of mental stamina with each arrow. Shooting out a hundred arrows in a row in this state caused an extremely nauseous feeling of exhaustion! If Ning was simply shooting out arrows without using the power of his heart, he wouldn't feel the slightest bit tired after shooting out even ten thousand. But it was very, very exhausting to be in the state where 'when the arrow flies, the heart flies with it!'

However...the power of the arrows in this state was truly tremendous, and the arrows were also much more accurate!

"Little master, you succeeded. You succeeded!" The black-robed youth was very excited.

"Thank you, Rahu Bow." Ning smiled in gratitude. Over the past three years, although he did study some of the secret archery manuals of the Divinities Palace, what truly made the difference was the guidance of the Rahu Bow! The Rahu Bow had watched many divine archers grow up; although he himself was not a divine archer, he had still been able to provide Ning with a shockingly significant amount of help.

If it hadn't been for the Rahu Bow, even ten years probably wouldn't have been enough for Ning to complete this trial.

"Heh heh, little master, only after you become a true divine archer can I, the Rahu Bow, truly show off my own illustriousness." The black-robed youth was extremely excited. "If you, little master, truly wish to show your gratitude towards me, then just procure a good bowstring for me."

"Right." Ning nodded and smiled. "Of course."

He had a number of poorer-quality bowstrings. After all, he could remove the bowstring from the violet greatbow he was currently using and use it for the Rahu Bow. However...this bow was far too weak. The Rahu Bow was a top-grade Protocosmic spirit-treasure; Ning really did have to procure a good bowstring for it!

Mount Innerheart. The Tristar Crescent Abode. Outside the fairly small Three Divinities Palace. Crazy Ji continued to snore there as he always did.

“Second senior apprentice-brother.” Ning walked over.

Crazy Ji didn’t even open his eyes as he mumbled, “The complete copy of [Houyi’s Archery] is on the table. Go take it yourself.”

“Thank you, second senior apprentice-brother.”

Ning immediately stepped inside. Floating above the abridged versions was a very eye-catching furled bamboo book. It was indeed the complete copy of [Houyi’s Archery]. Ning walked over, immediately filling it with his divine sense.

Rumble...

A large amount of information instantly began to flood into Ning’s soul.

A long, long time later. The sun had both risen and fallen. By the time the dawn was just arriving, as half of the distant Golden Crow could be seen peeking out from the distant horizon, Ning woke up.

“What a powerful archery technique,” Ning murmured to himself.

He was stunned. Truly, completely stunned.

According to the description of [Houyi’s Archery], if it was truly trained to the limit, to the level of the mighty primordial divinity Houyi who had created this divine ability...the power of the arrows would be truly terrifying, to the point of being above even the Sixth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand]!

If a True God were to reach the peak of this divine ability, then with a single arrow, the True God would be able to heavily injure or even kill

other True Gods!

But there was a reason why the complete mastery of [Houyi's Archery] was so ridiculously powerful.

Number one: The amount of mental energy this supreme archery technique used up was simply enormous. At the level of perfect mastery, even a True God would probably only be able to fire three, four, or five arrows before becoming utterly mentally drained and unable to fire off another arrow. Ning's [Starseizing Hand], however, could be used continuously without worry of using up any mental power.

Number two: This archery technique had extremely high requirements with regards to both the bow and the arrow. Especially the arrow! It must be understood that at full power, [Houyi's Archery] was mighty enough to annihilate a True God with a single arrow; to be able to compress this much power into a single arrow, the arrow had to be of tremendous quality, as it would otherwise collapse and break apart.

Thus, in order to execute this technique, one not only needed a good bow, one also needed some specially-prepared arrows that were incredibly powerful!

A superb bow. Superb arrows. And just a few shots before utter exhaustion!

Slightly poorer archery arts could allow for a hundred shots, while even poorer archery arts could easily allow for ten thousand shots. This was a testament to how truly draining this supreme archery technique was when it came to the power of the heart.

"The power of this archery art...although the number of times it can be used in succession is low, it truly is without question one of the top ten divine abilities created since Pangu established the universe!" Ning felt endless admiration towards this divine ability, as well as the number one God of the Bow of the Three Realms, Houyi.

Ning then stepped forward and picked up the abridged copy of the [Torch Dragon's Eye].

# Chapter 36: Leaving the Master's Tutelage

Early dawn.

“Uncle-master.”

“Uncle-master.”

“Patriarch.”

Escorted by a chorus of respectful calls, Ji Ning arrived at the entrance to the Tristar Crescent Abode. Holding a broom in his hands, he began to personally sweep the mountain paths.

Sweep. Sweep. The fallen leaves on the ground were all being swept away.

“That’s odd.”

“The Patriarch is personally sweeping the mountain paths? Isn’t that the trial for the first level of the Divinities Palace?”

“The Patriarch can enter even the ninth level whenever he pleases, to say nothing of the first. He defeats the ninth golem with utter ease.”

“But the Patriarch truly is sweeping the paths personally. Are we seeing things?”

“Maybe...maybe the Patriarch is meditating on something.”

The two Dao-novitiates who were guarding the entrance stared in amazement as they watched Ning personally sweep the mountain roads. They stealthily sent mental messages to each other regarding this. News quickly began to spread, and soon all of the disciples of Mount Innerheart came to know of it.

.....

Ning was very calm. He kept his head lowered, focusing on his broom. Each sweep of the broom felt like a cleansing sweep against his soul as well.

He swept each of the mountain steps, one at a time. His sweeping speed

wasn't too fast; he seemed to be enjoying this sweeping process.

He only finished his labors late in the afternoon.

"Oh, I'm done?" Only now did Ning come back to his senses. He straightened his back, then murmured softly to himself, "It seems as though when Master set trials such as sweeping the path and weeding the mountain, he had certain other things in mind as well."

"Apprentice." A voice suddenly rang out by Ning's ears.

Ning was momentarily startled, but then hurriedly responded, "Master!"

Despite having been on the mountain for so many years, Ning had never before received a direct mental message from his master like this.

"After you learn the [Torch Dragon's Eye], come to my place," the voice rang out again.

"Yes, master," Ning replied respectfully.

Ning quickly moved up the mountain, heart filled with questions. Why was his master summoning him? This was extremely rare. Could it be... that he was going to leave his master's tutelage soon?

.....

Ning went to the Three Realms Palace and acquired the full copy of the [Torch Dragon's Eye].

To date, the three major techniques which Ning had learned from the Three Realms Palace were the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], and [Torch Dragon's Eye].

The process of being transmitted the information regarding the [Torch Dragon's Eye] took a full day. The next day, Ning regained his faculty of mind. Only then did he head towards the Daoist monastery of Patriarch Subhuti.

"Uncle-master."

The two Dao-novitiates at the entrance to the monastery both called out respectfully. One of the two, Clearwater, also added, "Uncle-master, the

Patriarch has sent word that you are to be allowed direct entry.”

Ning nodded, smiled, then passed in.

Within the Daoist monastery.

There was a prayer mat within an open region with a skinny old man dressed in loose Daoist robes seated atop it. The old man’s hair was completely white, but he didn’t seem decrepit at all; rather, Ning felt as though this person had reached the level of infinite eternity. In addition, he also could sense a boundless life-force coming from this person. Ning couldn’t help but feel his own spirit completely calming down, thanks to his master’s simple presence.

“Master.” Ning walked in, then called out respectfully.

“Sit,” the Old Patriarch said.

Ning immediately sat down on a prayer mat in the lotus position, awaiting instruction.

The Old Patriarch looked at Ning, then said slowly, “How long have you spent on Mount Innerheart?”

“It has already been more than thirty years and five...this year shall be the thirty-sixth,” Ning said respectfully.

“Which abilities have you learned?” The Old Patriarch asked.

“Your disciple has learned the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and reached the Third Cycle! I’ve just reached a basic level of skill in [Houyi’s Archery]. I have also trained in the [Torch Dragon’s Eye] and reached the second stage of innate torch-light! In the past thirty-plus years, your disciple has primarily focused on swordplay; I’ve already mastered the ninth stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], and have learned other, more powerful sword-arts as well,” Ning said respectfully.

The Old Patriarch nodded. “You have many abilities now; it can be said that you are a completely different person compared to when you first came up the mountain. At your current level...remaining on Mount Innerheart will no longer help you as much as before. What you need to

do now is go temper yourself within the real world, so as to prepare for your upcoming Celestial Tribulation. Given your abilities, and given that you have the legacy of brother Threelives...your Celestial Tribulation will surely be extraordinary. It will be very, very difficult."

"Your disciple shall remember to be cautious." Ning was enlightened. So indeed, it was as he had expected...it was time for him to leave his master's tutelage.

"It is time for you to leave now." The Old Patriarch looked at Ning. "I once said that when you left my tutelage, I would give you two great gifts."

Ning instantly felt intrigued.

"After you entered my tutelage, I often watched you, appraising your comprehension ability, your talent, your habits...all for the sake of developing a completely unique evasion divine ability for you, known as the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens]," the Old Patriarch said.

Ning was overjoyed. This had been created just for him?!

Ning was badly in need of an evasive ability right now. He had been preparing to 'settle' for an evasive technique from the Divinities Palace if he couldn't find a good one, but unexpectedly his master had been preparing this for him the entire time, developing an evasive divine ability that was completely suited for Ning.

"You are a human, after all; if you are to train in any other evasive abilities, it will be hard for you to reach the peak in them. Even if I gave you the [Wings of the Garuda], from which your Windwing Evasion ability originates, you will never be able to reach the level which the great Roc did," the Old Patriarch explained. "The 'best' skill is the one most-suited to you. This technique, the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens], when trained to the utmost peak...although it might not be as good as perfect mastery over [Wings of the Garuda], it isn't that far off. You will be able to move 90,000 kilometers in a single movement." 1

"90,000 kilometers in a single movement?" Ning was extremely delighted. 90,000 kilometers...this was an astonishing speed!

"This is the evasive divine ability I prepared for you. In the future, when you have your own insights, perhaps you'll be able to further perfect it, allowing you to move even faster. That, however, shall be up to you," the Old Patriarch said.

Ning nodded.

An evasive ability which Patriarch Subhuti had personally developed... most likely it would be hard for Ning to improve on, even after he became an Empyrean God. Improving it...that would be a very, very distant task.

"I can see that in the future, you shall be a Sword Immortal. But any truly formidable Sword Immortal needs a powerful sword-formation," the Old Patriarch said. "The so-called [Heavenraker] sword formation, in truth, was used by Daofather Heavenrake as something he could teach his disciples. Even I don't know what his most formidable and profound sword-arts...Daofather Heavenrake keeps them hidden as his secret weapons for keeping himself alive."

Ning nodded.

"Your [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] relies on using many treasures, relying on superiority of numbers; when combined with an appropriate sword-art, it is indeed capable of unleashing tremendous power. Both the Daoist Way and the Buddhist Sangha have similar types of techniques that rely on overwhelming numbers. Using your [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] as the foundation, I have distilled the essence of the best Daoist and Buddhist techniques of this nature and developed a new sword-formation technique for you. I have given it the name, [Greater Thousand Swords Formation]," the Old Patriarch said. "If you have enough treasures, the power of this [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] will be absolutely astonishing. It can be described as one of the supreme sword-formations of the Three Realms."

"Thank you, Master!" Ning was both excited and overjoyed. The [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] evasive technique, the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] sword-formation technique...his master had personally designed both for him.

What Ning did not realize...

Was that Patriarch Subhuti was truly very diligent in teaching his students. Despite the passage of countless ages, the total number of students he had taken on was quite low, but he whole-heartedly focused on every single one he took on, especially during the early periods when they had first entered his tutelage. Although it seemed as though Ning hadn't had the chance to meet with his master many times, in reality Patriarch Subhuti had been constantly monitoring Ning. Then, based on Ning's own traits and characteristics, the Old Patriarch had tested out and developed these techniques in a completely separate world.

The [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens], for example; Patriarch Subhuti had spent hundreds of thousands of years developing it.

By comparison, the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was easier; after all, this sort of formation simply centered around massive numbers of treasures. Patriarch Subhuti had only spent a thousand years to develop it.

In this other world, the flow of time was different. This was why Patriarch was able to bring out these two techniques now.

.....

"Step forward," the Old Patriarch instructed.

Ning hurriedly stepped forward, walking in front of the Old Patriarch. The Old Patriarch tapped Ning on the center of his forehead.

Instantly, a large amount of information flooded into Ning's brain.

By the time Ning recovered, the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] and the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] had been firmly imprinted into his mind.

"Alright. It is time to leave," the Old Patriarch said.

"Master," Ning said respectfully. "Your disciple also wishes to meditate on the secrets of the lotus. I wish to make a trip to the Divinities Palace and acquire a few manuals on lotus techniques."

The Old Patriarch waved his hand and a bamboo book appeared within it. He handed it to Ning. "This is a set of lotus techniques I acquired by accident. The mysteries within it are unfathomably profound, and will be more than enough for you to meditate on. You can carry it with you."

"Thank you, Master." It was one surprise for Ning after another. Ning hurriedly added, "Your disciple has an apprentice, Bluecliff Xiaoyu, who has just arrived on the mountain and only been here a few years. She is still quite weak; your disciple would like to let her remain here at Mount Innerheart for now..."

The Old Patriarch nodded. "Then let her remain here and train quietly on the mountain. When the day comes that she can defeat the ninth golem, I will let her leave and send her to your Grand Xia world."

Only now did Ning feel completely relaxed. Everything had been arranged for.

"Alright. Time to leave the mountain," the Old Patriarch instructed. "Remember this: Without my permission, you are not to say that you are my disciple. Otherwise...do not blame your master for showing you no mercy. Only when I summon you back can you return to Mount Innerheart."

"Yes," Ning said respectfully.

"The Three Realms are now filled with secret, turbulent undercurrents. Even I, your master, might perish. You must be careful. You are not to be too rash and cause a disaster for yourself," the Old Patriarch said.

Ning instantly felt his heart shake. What? The Three Realms were filled with secret, turbulent undercurrents? Even his master might perish? Then how was someone like him, a junior fellow who wasn't even a Celestial Immortal, supposed to make it?

The Old Patriarch waved his sleeve. "Be it fortune or calamity...you shall bring it to yourself, and have no one else to blame or to thank. Now, go!"

Ning respectfully fell to his knees, pressing his head down to the ground

and kowtowing heavily nine times. “Your disciple is leaving now. Master, take care!”

His master had indeed spent considerable effort on his behalf. Both the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] and the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] were truly supreme techniques of the Three Realms. Even Daofathers weren’t capable of casually creating techniques on this level. Although his master hadn’t spelled it out, Ning could imagine how much enormous effort his master must’ve gone into in order to develop these techniques.

Ning would naturally engrave his memory of this kindness into his heart.

In addition, the thirty-plus years he had spent on Mount Innerheart had been the most peaceful years of his life, the years when he had truly, firmly established his foundation. After leaving the mountain, it would be as his master said; given how the Three Realms were filled with dangerous undercurrents, it would probably be hard for him to find such peace again.

.....

After Ning left, another person appeared within the Daoist monastery. It was the second apprentice, Crazy Ji.

“Master.” Crazy Ji watched as Ning walked away, then sighed, “This junior apprentice-brother of mine truly is a man of deep emotions.”

“Unfortunately, he was born at the wrong time.” The Old Patriarch shook his head. “When most of you were growing up, I was able to protect you. But he will be growing up in an era when a great tribulation is descending upon the Three Realms. The Three Realms are already filled with many dangerous undercurrents...and this tribulation may prove to be even more terrifying than the one that shattered Pangu’s Primordial World.”

“What?!” Crazy Ji’s face instantly changed.

“Nuwa has left long ago, entering the endless primordial chaos. Despite

the passages of countless years, she has never returned,” the Old Patriarch said. “When Nuwa was present, the Three Realms were finally settled down and the Six Paths of Reincarnation were established. The Celestial Court was created to manage the Three Realms, and the Daofathers and True Gods all separated into their respective territories. But with Nuwa gone...with the Six Paths of Reincarnation destroyed...with the Celestial Court only a court in name...with the Three Realms filled by dangerous undercurrents...I fear that this tribulation...”

The Old Patriarch shook his head.

Crazy Ji began to worry.

“But in times of tribulation, a person can bring either fortune or calamity upon himself. If it is calamity, only he himself can save himself,” the Old Patriarch said. “Everyone, including you and the others, all need to be careful. I imagine that a large number of True Gods and Daofathers shall die during this tribulation...and if even half of the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals survive, they should count their blessings. If you are faced with danger, I may not be able to protect you.”

“Your disciple shall remember and be cautious,” Crazy Ji said respectfully.

.....

Ning led Little Qing and Uncle White out of Mount Innerheart.

On the path to Mount Innerheart. Bluecliff Xiaoyu fell to her knees, pressing her forehead against the ground. “Your disciple shall definitely train hard. After I reach the ninth floor of the Divinities Palace, I will immediately head for the world of the Grand Xia to reunite with you, Master.”

Ning nodded and smiled. He then led Little Qing and Uncle White to fly out of Mount Innerheart.

They arrived in the sky-void, and as they did, a void tunnel appeared. This was a void-tunnel which Patriarch Subhuti had personally opened for them.

Ning, Little Qing, and Uncle White flew directly into it.

Swoosh! They all disappeared, and the void-tunnel closed behind them.

“Master!” Xiaoyu knelt there, tears streaming uncontrollably down her face. “I will definitely go to the Grand Xia world and meet you there.”

\*

Alas, this isn’t quite as fast as Sun Wukong’s ‘somersault cloud’, which allowed him to move 108,000 kilometers in a single somersault.

# Credits

Translator: [Iewatermelons](#)

Epub: [Estevam](#) / [dotNOVEL](#)